The Christ of God
LIGHT OF THE WORLD

ROY EUGENE DAVIS

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Roy Eugene Davis began his spiritual training with Paramahansa Yogananda in 1950, in Los Angeles, California. Mr. Davis is director of Center for Spiritual Awareness, which has world headquarters in northeast Georgia and branches in Europe and West Africa. He is the author of many bestselling inspirational books and editor-publisher of *Truth Journal* magazine. Some of his books are published in five languages: English, Italian, German, Portuguese and Japanese. Mr. Davis is a much-traveled speaker, lecturing frequently for various New Thought churches and centers, Yoga conferences, and Religion and Philosophy departments of colleges.

I salute the supreme teacher, the Truth,
whose nature is bliss, who is the giver
of the highest happiness, who is pure
wisdom, who is beyond all qualities and
infinite like the sky, who is beyond words,
who is one and eternal, pure and still,
who is beyond all change and phenomena
and who is the silent witness to all our
thoughts and emotions—I salute Truth,
the supreme teacher.

—Ancient Vedic Hymn

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Jesus the Christ, Incarnation of God

The Gospel According to Saint John, the fourth Gospel in the New Testament, is believed by scholars to have been written in both Hebrew and Greek and published late in the first century A.D. The author of the Gospel presupposes that the life history of Jesus is known to his readers; he begins his first chapter with a statement as to the real nature of the Christ and then goes on to narrate the events surrounding the beginning of Jesus' ministry. The earlier Gospels tell us of the birth of Jesus and a little about his boyhood, but John, it would seem, wrote his Gospel principally to inform people concerning the vital necessity to awaken from their delusions and to recognize their innate divinity. The emphasis of the Gospel of John is that such realization is possible through the Christ, the cosmic yet personal aspect of God which is both the cause of the worlds and the operant influence which redeems the worlds, That which draws souls back to the Godhead. John does not say that Jesus was a good man, or a righteous man; John states that, in Jesus, the very Son of God took human form as an act of divine intervention.

The focus of the Gospel of John is not unlike that of writers of other Eastern cultures who have, at one time or another, attempted to point people in the direction of their ultimate good by proclaiming the absolute divinity of a hero-spirit who seemed to embody in his life and teachings the best and most spiritually desirable qualities. In this and other Gos-

pels, Jesus is portrayed as an *avatara*, the descent of God into human form, resplendent with knowledge, power, love, and a conscious sense of divine purpose. At times, Jesus is also portrayed as having human qualities and being able to be appropriate to social customs.

In none of the Gospels do we find specific information about the life of Jesus between the time of his boyhood and the time when his ministry was about to begin. Some traditions which have been preserved in India and Tibet would indicate that Jesus traveled there during this period, in order to live with holy teachers and to prepare for his later work. Certainly his teaching emphasis, as well as his ability to command the elements, is compatible with the teachings and the abilities of spiritual masters of the East. One legend has it that after his resurrection, the time following that episode during which he prepared his disciples for their work, Jesus went to Kashmir, India, and there lived to an advanced age. Our purpose here, however, is not to overly speculate about what might have occurred, or what could have been, but to offer a commentary on John's Gospel which will have relevance for readers desiring a deeper understanding of the esoteric, the inner meaning of the life and teachings of Jesus, as well as insight into the nature and function of the Christ of God.

John is referred to as "the beloved disciple" of Jesus and a close companion of Peter, a brother disciple. John is believed to have been a cousin of Jesus, his own mother having been a sister of Mary, Jesus' mother. Since John made his living in the world as a fisherman, we can conclude that he was responsible in worldly matters. It has been determined that John spent his later years at Ephesus, where he preached, taught and wrote. Besides his Gospel, his writings include three Epistles and the Book of Revelation. The Hebrew version of his Gospel was written first.

Helpful references which I have used for the present commentary include Halley's *Bible Handbook* and *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*. My early years included regular church attendance and Bible study; my young adult years were spent in the study and practice of Yoga. It was from my guru, Param-

ahansa Yogananda, that I learned the inner meaning of the scriptures and was given the inspiration and assistance to enable me to experience some of the transforming incidents which are the core of the true Christ life.

Selections from *The Gospel According to Saint John;* with commentary.

> **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. (1:1—3)**

The word *logos*, from the Greek, is translated into English as "the Word." John states, then, that in the beginning the Word not only existed *with* God, but that It also *was* God. The Godhead possesses attributes and characteristics, but these attributes and characteristics cannot be separated from the Godhead. The three aspects of the Godhead are, in common Christian terms: God the Father, God the Christ, and God the Holy Spirit. These are but aspects of the One God. God is the only reality, the only being, the only power, the only essence, and the only substance.

God the Father — The aspect of the Godhead which is unmanifest and transcendental. This aspect can be experienced, but not understood while one is yet limited to the thinking process. The truth of this aspect of God can be intuitively discerned and it can be experienced during occasions of soul transcendence.

God the Son (Christ) — This aspect of God is involved with creation, with the relative spheres from subtle to gross manifestation. The Christ is the "only begotten of the Father" because It is the sole reflection of God in creation.

The Holy Spirit — Sometimes referred to in the Bible as the Holy Ghost. God in the aspect of divine power, the only doer and the cause (and substance) of nature.

God the Father is the source and reality behind all outer happenings. The Christ of God is the omnipresent "representative" involved with the world process. The Christ of God does the will of God the Father through the regulation and control of the Holy Spirit. Remember, these are but aspects of the One God.

The Holy Spirit aspect of God is referred to in some scriptures as the Word, because It has motion and emanates a sound which can be heard while in the meditative state or during occasions of partial transcendence. When the disciples of Jesus, after his having taken leave of them at the conclusion of his outer ministry, gathered on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1—4) "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting."

The Word, flowing from the Godhead in order to manifest the worlds, changes in frequency and assumes four characteristics: the creative life-force (as a causative aspect of the Word), particles (the building blocks of matter), space, and time. In this way does the Word "become flesh," or manifest forms.

> **In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. (1: 4—5)**

In Vedic scriptures the manifestation of the Word, as creation, is referred to as the "darkness," because souls which are identified with it become somewhat deluded and are not able to recall their true origin, which is the Godhead. The Christ of God indwells manifest creation as life and light, but those who are not able to discern the existence of the Christ of God cannot comprehend It (Him) because of their inability to use their powers of intuition and clear perception.

> **There was a man sent from God, whose name was John (the baptist). The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him**

> **might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. (1:6—9)**

John, the one who baptized his disciples in the river, was not fully illumined at the time; therefore, his mission was to bear witness of the Light that would soon manifest through Jesus. It is through the Light, through the Christ of God, that men are "saved" from future pain as a result of spiritual awakening. The Christ of God, the true Light, indwells every person because every person is divine, at the soul level, and is a specialized expression of God.

Paramahansaji taught that John the Baptist and Jesus had been, respectively, Elijah and Elisha, prophets mentioned in the Old Testament. There is more than a hint of this relationship to be found in the Gospel of John, but it was obviously the author's intention not to emphasize the doctrine of reincarnation. Rather, his emphasis was to direct people to God and to motivate them to awaken from the dream of mortality and experience illumination of consciousness.

> **He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (1:10—13)**

The Christ of God produced the worlds, but people of the world who lack intuitive perception cannot know the true nature of the Christ. Even when invited to examine the truth and to experience it, deluded people cannot do it. When one is spiritually awakened (born again), the Christ nature can be known and experienced. As a result, such souls then recall their divine nature and live as sons (children) of God. Yogis

teach that to "believe on His name" means to commune with the Word (Aum), which enables the meditator to transcend conditioned consciousness and to then experience the Christ nature. Sons of God are not born of the flesh; they awaken to the realization of their true nature, and this activity is made possible by God's grace. This occurs when one surrenders the sense of separateness, and then experiences uplift and awakening. The Spirit of God in man, at the soul level, then removes the veil from the mind and the light of truth is revealed.

> **And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth. (1:14)**

The Jesus body-mind-personality was the outer vehicle through which the Christ of God manifested. John is here referring to the *avatara* concept, the full expression of God as light, power and glory through human form. Jesus, while in personality consciousness, would say, "I, of myself, can do nothing. The Father within, He doeth the works." Even the Christ aspect of God is but the outer reflection and "servant" of God the Father. When we examine this matter of Jesus as the outer expression and the Christ as the influential reality, we are not diminishing Jesus; we are acknowledging the Christ of God.

> **John bare witness of Him, and cried, saying, This was He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for He was before me. And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (1:15—17)**

John the Baptist proclaimed the Christ as being preferred over his own teaching, because the Christ of God existed with the Godhead before the worlds were formed. He also proclaimed that with the coming of Jesus the Christ a new em-

phasis would be made, that of the possibility of forgiveness for those who make mistakes, instead of unfailing punishment because of rigid rules. The disciples of Jesus were so certain of his divinity that they often referred to him as Jesus Christ, instead of Jesus the Christ ("the anointed of God").

> **No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. (1:18)**

God is Spirit, and invisible to human sight. God the Father is transcendental and beyond the space-time order, but the Christ of God is fully involved with creation. Therefore, the existence of the Christ declares (proves) the existence of God the Father.

John the Baptist had attracted attention because of his ministry, and political leaders were curious about him. They, like most others of the time, knew of the prophecies regarding the coming of the Messiah, one who would deliver the Jewish people. John the Baptist affirmed that he was not the Messiah, nor was he any of the Old Testament prophets returned. He affirmed that he was merely the one chosen, for that time and place, to prepare the way for one who would baptize, not with water as a symbol of purification, but with the Holy Spirit which has power to transform and redeem. It is of interest that Jesus accepted the rite of baptism by John because it was the appropriate thing to do and marked a stage in his emergence as spiritual teacher to the public. John the Baptist also had disciples, and these he transferred to the care of Jesus.

In chapter two of this Gospel we learn of the first miracle performed by Jesus in public. It was the celebrated conversion of water into wine so that the wedding guests at Cana could be fully entertained. Jesus was asked by Mary his mother to provide more wine for the company. Jesus then asked that six waterpots made of stone, each having sufficient volume to contain two or three firkins, be filled to the brim with water. (A firkin is about one-fourth of a barrel in volume, so each waterpot probably held about twenty gallons.) When the

water was drawn from the pots and taken to the one who presided over the feast, it was pronounced to be good wine.

In chapter three, we find that Nicodemus, a ruler (one with religious influence and authority) came to Jesus by night. He said to Jesus, "We know that you are a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that you do except God be with him." Jesus responded:

> **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (3:3)**

Nicodemus asked, out of his confusion, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" The answer was given by Jesus:

> **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. (3:5—8)**

Man born of water (the material elements) remains conscious of himself as a material being unless spiritually quickened. The activity of the Holy Spirit in our lives regenerates, purifies and awakens. Jesus compared the activity of the Holy Spirit to the wind, which is discernable when it is moving but which must remain somewhat a mystery (to unenlightened man) relative to its past and future movements. The kingdom of God is experienced (seen) when errors in perception are eradicated and one clearly discerns the inner nature of consciousness.

As Nicodemus continued to ask questions, Jesus answered:

> **Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? (3:10—12)**

Jesus chided Nicodemus with the words, "Are you not a religious teacher and still you do not know these things?" Further, "If you cannot accept what I say when I speak of worldly matters, how can you possibly accept what I say when I speak of more esoteric matters?"

The following verse is one of the more well known, and often quoted by fundamentalist Christians:

> **For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (3:16)**

Some would have us believe that God sent souls into involvement with the world and gave them free will so that they could choose to either play by His rules or perish. That is not the picture of a loving God. God is, in fact, the cause of the worlds, and God as Christ regulates the evolutionary process. Man does have choices, up to a point. While involved with personal interests, man can elect not to contemplate a higher way of life and thus miss out, for a duration, on the good which is available to him. But no soul ever really perishes, because each soul is a ray of God-consciousness, and God-consciousness is not perishable. Anyone who chooses to commune with the Christ nature is certain to experience accelerated spiritual unfoldment. He is certain to experience transformation and awaken to the truth about life.

> **For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him**

might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. (3:17—21)

It is the Christ of God which produced the worlds, rules the worlds, and eventually draws all outer expression back to the Source. The "condemnation" is explained here as self-condemnation due to a preference for an ego-directed life. God does not condemn anything that man does. Man himself creates his own problems and causes his own pain. Many who are caught up in unwise and nonuseful behavior actually fear the truth, because they do not want to face themselves as they have been living. Good is that which contributes to fulfillment and increased soul awareness. Evil is that which contributes to suffering, pain, and a shutting down of awareness. Again, the esoteric meaning of "believing on Him" is to commune with the Christ of God.

Chapter four relates the story of Jesus at the well, asking a Samaritan woman for a drink of water. Sensing that her spiritual need is greater than his present need for water, Jesus informs the woman that, if she would but ask, he would provide her with spiritual awakening (a well of water springing up into everlasting life). While conversing with her, Jesus says:

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship

Him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. (4:23, 24)

Men worship God according to their own understanding and capacities. Some worship God in form; that is, as Father, Mother, a divine personage, or even a symbol that has meaning. Some consider certain places of worship to be holy and are able to experience a deeper sense of the presence of God in such places. Eventually, one no longer needs outer forms or inner concepts; one will be able to experience the nature of Reality as Pure Being, as Spirit. While he is in relative consciousness, man thinks of himself as being apart from God. With transcendence, however, the soul knows itself to be a wave on the ocean of God-consciousness, and knows itself as the Christ of God, a reflection of God expressing for the purpose of doing God's will.

In the fifth chapter, we read the story of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, near the sheep market. It was believed by the people that the waters of this pool possessed curative properties. For this reason the impotent, the lame, the halt and the blind would gather there in the expectation of being healed. One man spoke to Jesus and told him that he had no one to help him into the pool. Jesus asked him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The man was thinking that Jesus might assist him into the pool; instead, Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." Immediately the man was made whole. Later, Jesus saw him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." The Gospel account does not inform us of the nature of the man's infirmity. Because he required assistance for his healing, we can infer that he was weak and lacking in strength. Jesus advised him to correct his pattern of living so that the condition, or something worse, would not afflict him in the future.

Jesus was questioned by the authorities as to why he

healed on the sabbath day. He responded, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Further:

> **Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that Himself doeth; and He will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will. (5:19—21)**

The King James version of the Bible has Jesus frequently prefacing his comments with the word *verily*. This word means "in very truth; truly; really; indeed." Therefore, in this opening statement Jesus is saying, "Truly, the Son can do nothing of Himself." In Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament, it is recorded that God rested on the seventh day, after He had manifested creation. This has to do with the creative process, and signified that the work was done. Many religious people, even to this day, do not work on the sabbath, but reserve it as a day of rest and worship. However, God's influence must continue if the worlds are to be maintained. Therefore, the Christ of God must also "work," or be active, to express God's intention and influence.

Jesus, speaking from the level of Christ-Conscious awareness, identified the Christ with God the Father. Jesus obviously saw the value in performing miracles, when needed, to attract the attention of people and cause them to wonder. The emphasis, however, was to raise up and quicken the spiritually dead, those who were unconscious of their divine nature. Jesus continues:

> **Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself. (5:25,26)**

Sooner or later, the spiritually dead will "hear the voice of the Son of God" and they shall know the true meaning of life as a result of their soul quickening. For meditators to "hear the voice" is to hear the internal sound of the life-current in the body, which emanates from the soul. Expanding awareness, the meditator then hears the Word, the primal sound which issues forth from the Godhead under the direction of the Christ nature of God. Flowing attention back to the Source, the meditator experiences the Word, then Christ Consciousness, then the transcendental aspect of God as Pure Being. This is the meaning of the words, "None cometh unto the Father except by me." No soul can experience the Absolute nature of God without moving through the awareness of cosmic consciousness and the Christ aspect of God as expressing through creation. One need not be a member of any church body or of any organized religious movement in order to experience Self-realization and God-realization. Names, forms, and all external relationships are renounced as one flows attention to the Source.

> **And the Father Himself which hath sent Me, hath borne witness of Me. Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape. And ye have not His word abiding in you: for whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receiveth honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? (5:37—44)**

Jesus could be very much to the point when the occasion required it. He tells the people that the miracles which He

performs, which are divine manifestations, are proof that He is not a mere teacher. By affirming that His miracles are divine manifestations He declares that He is not a magician who has learned a few mental skills for the purpose of popularizing himself. He goes on to say that His hearers are not spiritually awake and that they search the scriptures in vain. Further, while the Christ of God does not seek recognition and praise from men, men are too often prone to confer recognition upon one another. A spiritually unaware person will often accept the teaching of another who is spiritually unaware, rather than seek out the truth about life and undergo necessary transformation.

The miracle of the multiplication of five barley loaves and two small fish is told in the opening verses of chapter six of the Gospel. Five thousand people were fed and twelve baskets with the fragments of the loaves of bread were left over.

Later (6:15—20) Jesus went into the mountains, and His disciples departed by ship for Capernaum. Darkness fell, and Jesus had not yet rejoined them. "And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew." The disciples rowed about twenty-five or thirty furlongs (a distance of approximately two to three miles), and then saw Jesus, walking on the sea toward their ship. "And they were afraid." He said to them, "It is I; be not afraid." He then boarded the ship and they arrived at their destination.

Can we believe such a story? Yes, we can believe, because to a perfected master nothing is impossible. Such a one sees all of creation as a play of lights and shadows. Paramahansa Yogananda, in his book *Autobiography of a Yogi*, writes this about the law of miracles:

> A yogi who through perfect meditation has merged his consciousness with the Creator perceives the cosmical essence as light (vibrations of life energy); to him there is no difference between

the light rays composing water and the light rays composing land. Free from matter-consciousness, free from the three dimensions of space and the fourth dimension of time, a master transfers his body of light with equal ease over or through the light rays of earth, water, fire, and air.

Many among the multitudes who had been fed the day before followed Jesus and His disciples to the other side of the sea, by boat. Jesus was asked by the people who had followed, "When did you come here?" Jesus then instructed them:

> **Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed. (6:26, 27)**

Jesus accused the people of being overly interested in the fact that He had satisfied their hunger, without looking beyond to how and why it was made possible. The word "meat" was common usage for food. The people were told not to work overly for material food only, but to yearn for spiritual food which could sustain them forever. To be sealed is to be vested with authority.

> **I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, that ye also have seen Me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will; but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up**

again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. (6:35—40)

A perfected master knows that the very life of God flows through him to awaken and transform souls who are drawn to him. In referring to Himself as the bread of life, Jesus affirmed that through God's power, expressing through and as Him, receptive souls would be awakened and never again hunger after the truth about life. Their spiritual thirst would be quenched forever as a result of inner realization. Jesus was aware of His destined mission, that He had come to impart life to the world and to those receptive souls who would be drawn to Him (all that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me). The promise of Jesus, like the promise of every God-sent guru, is that all who come into attunement with him shall be "saved by grace," or be liberated no matter what the circumstances or seeming obstacles.

There is always need for discernment and self-honesty on the spiritual path. Some begin their quest for knowledge because they are suffering and seek relief from pain. Some begin on the path because they desire a degree of dominion, in order to acquire things and handle circumstances. A few seek God because of a genuine desire to know the truth. Jesus, like other masters before and since, often helped people to meet their pressing human needs, but He was ever insisting upon the supreme usefulness of going beyond the level of mere comfort and sense-satisfaction to the realization of the truth about life, which alone guarantees satisfaction forever.

The authorities with whom Jesus had been talking "murmured at Him" (6:41,42) because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." And they said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He saith, I came down from heaven?"

Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to

> **Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save He which is of God, He hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread that cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. (6:43—51)**

God reveals the truth to man through direct revelation and through the teaching and example of an illumined person, who reflects the Christ of God. Those to whom He spoke saw Jesus only as a mortal man, whose family history they knew. It was difficult for them to believe that here standing before them was one who spoke out of direct realization of the truth. Jesus further compared bread (food, nourishment) with That which nourishes the soul. The Christ of God, He declared, is the food that nourishes the soul. He states that the Christ of God, if accepted and received, will ensure conscious immortal life.

Knowing of the cultural and religious custom of the times, that of sacrificing an animal to atone for sins, Jesus declared that instead He would share His flesh (His spirit) with mankind. It is only the unenlightened who could believe that Jesus taught that His own ritual suffering and death on the cross could atone for the world's errors. He was not a divine animal; He was the embodiment of Christ Consciousness. The Christ does not have to "die" in order for error-prone man to live. Christ *cannot* die, because the Christ is God in expression. The

esoteric meaning of the flesh and blood of Jesus the Christ is the consciousness (substance) and spirit of the Christ of God. When this is eaten (received and absorbed), mortality is cast off and conscious immortality in God is known.

Even the disciples of Jesus were challenged by His statements. When Jesus knew of their talking among themselves about the matter:

> **He said unto them, Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life. But there are some of you who believe Me not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him. And He said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father. From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. (6:61-69)**

Jesus had many more disciples than the twelve so frequently mentioned, but many of them left Him when His teachings became too difficult for them to understand and accept. Every illumined guru can tell which of his disciples will continue on the path and which will depart because of their own weaknesses or inability to follow the instructions given them. It was Simon Peter who spoke, on behalf of those who remained with Jesus, when he declared his recognition of the Christ. He was able to see through the Jesus personality and to discern the truth of the words and the mission of his guru.

During this time, Jesus felt it best not to be too public with His personal presence, because there were those in political power who resented His teaching and His supernatural abilities. He refused, for instance, as we read in chapter seven, to go with His brethren to the feast of the tabernacles. Later, He did go to the gathering in secret, that is, without making a public declaration of His presence. Some present asked His whereabouts; others talked about Him, saying, "He is a good man," while others said, "Nay, but He deceiveth the people." Later, Jesus went up into the temple and taught; those who heard Him marvelled and said, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" They saw Him only as a common citizen of the area, not knowing His inner condition of grace and realization. Jesus responded:

> **My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him. Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me? (7:16-19)**

The truth, as spoken by a fully illumined person, is neither a personal theory nor a mixture of half-revelation and partial error. The "doctrine" of the masters is the truth about God and the worlds. The Buddha, speaking very much as Jesus did, once said, "Only he who lives the life shall know the Doctrine." If one on the spiritual path will do "His will" by entering into a program of intentional discipline, surrender of the ego-sense and deep contemplation, the truth about life will be revealed to that person. Jesus was not saying that the personality came down from heaven and had power to redeem souls. He was saying that the Christ of God became embodied, and it is the Christ which has the power. He challenged His listeners by telling them that even though they had the law of Moses to

follow, the rules and regulations for ordering their lives and their society itself, they were hypocritical. He explained why:

> I have done one work and ye all marvel. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. (7:21-24)

Jesus again tried to reason with those with whom He talked. He pointed out that they had been surprised and judgmental when He had healed a man on the sabbath, because it was their custom that work should not be done on this day. Believing this, they nevertheless practiced ritual work on the sabbath if it was appropriate for them to do so, the custom being that a male child should be circumcised on the eighth day following its birth, whether the day fell on the sabbath or not. Perhaps Jesus was pointing out that if they made exceptions when it was deemed spiritually appropriate to do so, they should not fault Him for doing a spiritually appropriate thing. Although Moses did not originate the ritual practice of circumcision, he supported it because it was the custom of his people, having been initiated by Hebrew leaders before his time.

As a result of His teachings, many believed that Jesus was a true representative of God, but many were challenged. One reason for the division of thought among the people was that it was said that the long-awaited Messiah would come out of the town of Bethlehem. Apparently, many did not know that Jesus had been born there; instead, they assumed that His only place of habitation had been Galilee, and the scriptures did not point to Galilee as the area from which the Messiah would come. Many of the people were still examining the letter of the scripture, to the best of their understanding, and did not have the capacity to discern the truth when it was taught.

Chapter eight opens with Jesus having gone to the Mount of Olives. He went to the temple again early in the morning, and the people gathered around Him.

> **And the scribes and the Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest Thou? (8:3—5)**

A Pharisee was a member of an ancient Jewish sect which believed in the validity of the oral law and in the free interpretation of the written law by seeking to discover its inner meaning. A scribe, at the time of Jesus, was one who performed clerical duties, as well as one of the class of teachers who presented Jewish law to the people. Jesus sometimes referred to both as being self-righteous and hypocritical. In the instance here, they were obviously testing Jesus to see how He would handle the situation.

Instead of immediately answering them, Jesus knelt down and "with His finger wrote on the ground." Since He spoke to His questioners a little later, we can conclude that when Jesus knelt to write on the ground He was engaging in an idle activity, to allow tempers to cool so that a more reasonable conversation could ensue. Similar ways are used to allow time to pass by people of various cultures. As He continued to be questioned He:

> **. . .He lifted up Himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone. And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own consciences, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. (8:7—9)**

It was the custom at the time that a woman proven to be an adulterer would be taken to a public place where the people could throw stones at her, even until she was killed. Jesus, however, taught forgiveness and the ideal of helping people in the direction of a better way of life. His answer to the scribes and Pharisees was perfect. Without involving Himself in a debate, He allowed them to examine their own consciences. To "sin" is to err, to miss the mark, to fall short of one's own aspirations. Indeed, who among us, at one time or another, has not fallen short, and not always lived up to even his own expectations?

> **When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. (8:10,11)**

Jesus stood and looked at the woman. The general public was there, but He "saw none" but the one formerly accused. He didn't preach a lengthy sermon to her; instead, He simply said, "Neither do I condemn you; go your way and don't make the same mistake again." Then He spoke to the others:

> **I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees therefore said unto Him, Thou bearest record of Thyself; Thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of Myself, yet My record is true; for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, My judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.**

I am one that bear witness of Myself, and the Father that sent Me beareth witness of Me. (8:12–18)

The Christ of God is the true light of the world. When the Christ of God is known, delusion is banished and only light remains. The Pharisees, still clinging to their interpretation of the law (that a person's statement about himself could not be accepted as true unless another person would testify to it) stated that they could not accept Jesus' assertion. Jesus replied that He could be believed because He knew His past and His future, while those who questioned Him were bound by their own narrow opinions. He then asserted that His testimony could be believed because there *was* another witness, none other than God, His own Larger Self.

Then Jesus was asked, "Where is Thy Father?" He said:

Ye neither know Me, nor My Father; if ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also. I go My way, and ye shall seek Me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world: I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins. (8:19, 21–24)

When we know who the Christ of God is, we know who God is. Jesus explained that man in mortal consciousness is "of this world," but the Christ of God is not of this world. All who do not awaken to the realization of their soul nature are certain to remain deluded until they do awaken. The problem man always has, so long as he remains identified with conditioned mind, is that he cannot comprehend what is taught by an illumined person. Jesus, like other great masters, often taught the public through parables, simple stories with a message. With His disciples and a few others, He attempted to tell the truth, and often was not understood.

When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things. And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone, for I do always those things that please Him. (8:28, 29)

Only when the human nature is elevated and transcendence is experienced can we know the reality of the Christ of God. Jesus again stated that His function was to do the will of God. When we do the will of God, we always experience the presence of God in and through our lives.

If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (8:31, 32)

Here is the essence of the teaching: if one will live the ideal life and merge in the Word through meditation, one will be a true disciple on the path. As a result of faithful adherence to the ideal way of living, one will come to know the truth about God, the Christ, the Holy Spirit, the soul, the world, and the entire process of life. Knowing about the principles of right living is not the same as actualizing those principles. It is so easy, while in conditioned consciousness, to be tempted to read widely and to talk about the principles of consciousness. Only a few souls out of the many who examine these principles actually embody them and experience liberation of consciousness. The duration of human life is comparatively brief; it therefore behooves us to make every effort possible to experience the inner change and soul awakening which is available to us in this present incarnation.

While it is true that one can continue his spiritual unfoldment in the subtle astral realms after leaving the body, many will also return to the material world in a new body, to continue the journey to Self-discovery. What the great masters teach is that it is possible to awaken and experience Self-reali-

zation in this present life-cycle, if one is intent upon the path and willing to surrender to God's will.

Jesus's listeners still did not understand what He was trying to explain. They said to Him, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?" They were speaking of being free in human society, but Jesus was talking about something quite different.

> **Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (8:34—36)**

Whoever continues to live in error remains the servant of error. All souls will sooner or later awaken and learn to live without error. The Son, the Christ of God, is forever free; therefore, one who awakens to the conscious realization of his divine nature will also be forever free.

Those with whom Jesus spoke became defensive and asserted, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." They asserted this because it was in their scripture and it was their learned belief, but they did not in fact realize the truth of what they said, because Jesus responded:

> **If God were your Father, ye would love Me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe Me not. Which of you convinceth Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe**

Me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore heareth them not, because ye are not of God. (8:42-47)

Of course, all souls have come out of the field of God and are therefore expressions of the Godhead. But Jesus was speaking to His listeners at their level of understanding. He was saying that the Christ of God comes directly into the world to express God's will, and is never tainted.

The Old Testament prophets referred to the fabric of nature, which blinds the soul, as Satan. In Hebrew, the word means "the adversary." In the Greek Testament the equivalent term used is *diabolos*, or "devil." While many Christians consider the devil to be a "person" with almost godlike powers, those who understand what the masters teach know that maya, "the darkness," or the fabric of nature, is what veils the soul's intuitive capacity to know the truth. Man, confused by the world because of his lack of understanding of its true nature, is dominated by it until he is enlightened.

The world is illusory, but it is not an illusion; that is, the world is a manifestation of creative force, particles, space and time, and is ever changing. Man's inability to comprehend the true nature of the phenomenal world constitutes a personal sense of delusion. When we are able to clearly see the truth about the world we are no longer of it. We are then able to function freely in the world, without attachments and without being unduly influenced by circumstances. When we are spiritually awakened we can then "hear God's words" because our intelligence and our intuition are no longer clouded.

The people then felt rebuked. Their feelings were hurt, and they lashed out at Jesus, accusing Him of being of impure stock and even demon-possessed (8:48): "Say we not well, that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" The Samaritans were a mixed race of people and were not held in high regard by those who took pride in their own family lineage. They said to Jesus, in effect, "You are telling us that we are not right? Look at you, you are not of pure blood, and you are even possessed!" Jesus responded to this attack:

I have not a devil; but I honour My Father, and ye do dishonour Me. And I seek not Mine own glory: there is One that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep My saying, he shall never see death. (8:49—51)

Every person who is not yet illumined is self-judged, by his own states of consciousness, his general mental attitude, and his unwise behavior. There is no person, or being, external to man, who judges him. Jesus taught the truth, that anyone who really understands the true nature of the soul and its relationship to God will be conscious forever and will never again become unconscious or be at the mercy of mental and emotional confusion.

Then the people became even more upset, and said to Jesus (8:52, 53): "Now we know that Thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets (are dead); and Thou sayest, if a man keep My saying, he shall never taste of death. Art Thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? And the prophets (which) are dead: whom makest Thou Thyself?"

Jesus responded with a few words, including:

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad. (8:56)

Abraham walked with God and knew the reality of God as the eternal Absolute, the I Am nature of God. He "saw" (experienced) the Christ of God. The people were still confused and skeptical, for they said to Jesus (8:57): "Thou are not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" Jesus replied:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM. (8:58)

Before the worlds were formed, Pure Consciousness existed. Pure Consciousness, the transcendental aspect of God,

is beyond space and time and has been experienced by many saints and seers. Speaking from the realization of His Christ nature, Jesus affirmed that the Christ of God existed prior to the days of Abraham, indeed even before the worlds were formed.

Jesus then left the temple and, in chapter nine, we learn of the healing of a blind man. The disciples of Jesus were with Him and they asked (9:2): "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?"

It is obvious that the disciples of Jesus believed in reincarnation and in the doctrine of karma, the principle of cause and effect as it relates to human experience. They wanted to know if the man's blindness was due to prior causes of his own, or due to a genetic cause. Jesus answered them:

> **Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. (9:3—5)**

Jesus avoided metaphysical speculation as to the cause of the man's blindness. He was not interested in discussion; He was interested in results. He was saying, "Let's not indulge in idle conversation about the condition; let's just clear it up!" He went on to state that time was short and there was much work to be done. In some early manuscripts the phrase reads, "We must work the works...", a clear indication that the disciples of Jesus were a vital part of His ministry.

Jesus then moistened some clay with His saliva and placed it upon the man's eyes, telling him to go to a nearby pool of water to wash his face. Upon following these instructions, the man's sight was instantly restored. It was not necessary for Jesus to perform the ritual of anointing the man's eyes with moistened clay and having him go to the pool to wash; it was obviously designed to create faith in the man so that

the healing forces would be aroused.

After the healing of the blind man, many people who had known him discussed the incident among themselves and, as usual, some were impressed and some were not able to accept the fact that Jesus had indeed performed a minor miracle. Some of the Pharisees who were with Jesus drew Him into a discussion.

Chapter ten opens with Jesus speaking:

> **Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them. (10: 1—6)**

Jesus was here laying the foundation for a special message He wanted to impart. He talked in terms that His listeners could understand. Everyone at the time knew of shepherds and how they looked after their flocks. Jesus spoke of the trust that the animals had in their masters and of how they would follow the shepherd because they knew his voice and behavior. He continued:

> **Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved,**

and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (10: 7—10)

Moving on to His real message, Jesus explained that the Christ of God is the "door" through which seeking souls enter into true spiritual freedom. Speaking of those who came before Him as thieves and robbers, Jesus was referring to the religious leaders who had been dominating the lives of the people. He went on to assert that if one would leave the old ways and enter into the Christ spirit, one would be "saved" from pain and hardship due to error. The marvelous thing about spiritual awakening is that, as a result of it, one experiences freedom from all limitation and restrictions.

I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also must I bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father. (10:14—18)

Earlier Jesus stated that He was the door through which souls could enter and experience freedom in God. Then He compared Himself to a shepherd who knows his sheep. A master knows his disciples and shares his life with his disciples. A master with a special mission knows that his work is cosmic, that he is not present merely to teach a few people; he is on earth for a duration to invite all willing souls into the full realization of God. Jesus referred to laying down His phys-

ical body, and of taking it up again. He also stated that it would be of His own volition, because He had the power to leave His body at will and to animate it again at will.

A Self-realized master knows that the mind and body are but connections with the material universe, and he has full control over mind and body. It is very interesting to observe a perfected master; sometimes they behave in very human ways and, at other times, they demonstrate their omniscience and omnipotence. I have observed some masters in the quiet of their personal environment and have enjoyed seeing them behave in normal human ways, even exhibiting personality traits due to cultural conditioning or environmental influences, and then suddenly change and demonstrate remarkable abilities. I know, for instance, that Paramahansa Yogananda often looked into his spiritual eye to see what disciples who were hundreds of miles distant were doing. He could also "know by knowing" without having to look into the inner spaces. I have heard personal accounts of Paramahansaji's having materialized a subtle body in order to visit disciples for special purposes. Masters can also move easily through mental spaces and appear to disciples during dreams. I have had many experiences of this nature with Paramahansaji and others with whom I share a common spiritual destiny.

Masters and saints sometimes manifest multiple bodies and appear at different places simultaneously if they have needed work to attend to. I know of a recent instance in which a master in India manifested a body in America to fulfill an obligation. Some saints of the Catholic tradition have been known to possess the ability to visit persons in need while manifesting a subtle body. They simply appear and disappear wherever their influence is needed.

People were still debating the matter of just who this person, Jesus, might actually be. Some did not believe Him, some wanted to believe Him, a few did believe Him. Finally, a question was put to Him (10:24) "How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." He had already been telling them "plainly" but they did not yet have the capacity to hear what he was saying.

> **I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one. (10:25—30)**

Jesus clearly stated that His life and ministry were proof of His real nature. He suggested that His miracles were not mere acts of deception, but flowed from His consciousness to meet personal needs. Because those with whom He talked were not His disciples, and were not open to the possibility of personal transformation, they were not able to discern His motives, His words, or His reality. As a true guru, He said that those who were drawn to Him were assured of eternal security in God. He then affirmed His real essence: that the Christ of God is an aspect of the One God—there is only oneness.

Then those with whom Jesus talked took up stones to throw at Him. Jesus said:

> **Many good works have I shewed you from My Father; for which of those works do ye stone Me? (10:32)**

And they said (10:33): "For a good work we stone Thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God." Earlier Jesus had been challenged because He healed on the Sabbath. Now, the emphasis has changed, and He is being threatened because of His assertion that He is one with God. Jesus responded:

> **Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? (Psalm 82:6) If he called them gods, unto whom**

> **the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him. (10:34—38)**

Ancient Hebrew judges, those responsible for establishing and maintaining the laws by which the people were governed, were given special status. They were referred to as gods by the psalmist because they were supposed to possess special understanding and to be God's earthly representatives relative to establishing laws. Because of this, their word was final and could not be disputed. Jesus said, in effect, "You consider the judges of old to be gods because of their special status and knowledge. You honor them and abide by their judgments. Yet you say that I, who have been given special influence by God, am irreverent because I speak of My relationship with God." He went on to advise that if they could not believe His words, they should at least accept His works—the results of His ministry.

Jesus then departed and went to the place beyond the river Jordan where John the Baptist had first baptized converts. Many people learned of His place of retirement and gathered about Him. They saw in Him the fulfillment of the prophecies made by John the Baptist and they believed in Him.

We now come to a most educational chapter in our examination of John's Gospel: the resurrection of Lazarus, who had died and whose body had been placed in a tomb. The opening verse of chapter eleven states that Lazarus was sick. He was the brother of Mary and Martha. The sisters went to Jesus with the news.

> **When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the**

> **Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was. Then after that saith He to His disciples, Let us go into Judaea again (11:4—7)**

The nature of the sickness is not mentioned, but it was obviously serious enough to alarm the sisters of Lazarus and to cause them to go to Jesus and tell Him about it. Perhaps they wanted Jesus to heal their brother, or perhaps they needed consolation. Jesus remained for two days where He was, before announcing to His disciples His intention of going to see Lazarus.

His disciples sought to prevent Him from going to Judea and reminded Him that only shortly before the rulers there had tried to stone Him. Jesus responded:

> **Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. These things said He; and after that He saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awaken him out of sleep. Then said His disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spoke of his death: but they thought that He had spoken of taking rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them, plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless, let us go unto him. (11:9—15)**

John describes Jesus as choosing an opportunity for spiritual instruction whenever the occasion seems appropriate. Jesus, knowing His destiny and knowing future events, asserted that He walked in the light of understanding and therefore would not make a mistake. This is evident from the ex-

planation (11:10) that if a man walks in the night he will stumble (make mistakes) because there is no inner illumination. Jesus referred to Lazarus' condition as sleep, instead of death, until He was forced to explain the situation.

A master of perfection can not only command the elements; he can also command the vital forces of the universe. Incidents of souls returning to the body, after having been pronounced dead, are not unknown even today. The absence of vital signs proves only that the body is not animated; it does not prove that the soul is absent. In the majority of instances, when the soul withdraws its vitality from the body, it leaves the body permanently. The soul of Lazarus was slipping away from the body, but a faint connection yet remained. So long as some soul force remains connected to the brain and nervous system there is the possibility of the soul reanimating the body. It was surely a matter of destiny that Jesus decided to call Lazarus back into the physical body.

I know of instances similar to this Gospel account. I once knew an American businessman who was elderly and frail. On a visit to India to visit his guru, he collapsed and was taken to the hospital. Upon arrival he was pronounced dead and his body taken to a room, there to be kept until his family could make plans for its removal and disposal. In the meantime, his wife went to their guru and informed him that her husband was ill; she did not know that he had been pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital. Their guru said to her, "See me at the hospital in the morning," and he specified a time. Upon going to the hospital the next morning, the wife was informed that her husband, although in critical condition, was recovering. Their guru had gone to the hospital and told the man to come back into the body, and the man did so. He said later that he knew he was not dead, even though his body was inanimate. He was present with the body all the time but could not get back into it until his guru came to him and commanded him to do so. The man lived for a duration after that incident and was able to complete certain projects which he considered of importance.

> **Then when Jesus came, He found that he had lain in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him: but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. (11:17—23)**

What trust, what perfect faith, is demonstrated in the attitude of Martha! Jesus responded to that trust and perfect faith by asserting that Lazarus would live. He didn't say, "I'll see what I can do." He said, "Your brother will rise and live!"

> **She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, Which should come into the world. And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, the Master is come, and calleth for thee. (11:27, 28)**

Martha recognized that Jesus was more than a human being; the Real Nature of Jesus was, to her, the very Christ of God. She was trusting and obedient and followed Jesus' instructions without question.

The people who had been in the house comforting Mary saw her depart and concluded that she had gone to the grave of Lazarus to mourn him. When Jesus saw her weeping, and those with her weeping (11:33), ". . .He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled." He then asked the location of the tomb and was taken to it. The shortest verse in the Bible is John 11:35: "Jesus wept." This was not the only occasion when Jesus shed tears of compassion for others.

When the people saw Jesus' tears they felt His love for

Lazarus. But some of them wondered among themselves (11: 37): "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

It is not easy for an unawakened person to understand destiny, or the karmic and personal needs of others. Of course, Jesus could have healed Lazarus when He was first informed of his illness. He could even have restored him to physical life without actually going to the grave site. An illumined master's consciousness is omnipresent; therefore, he does not have to take his body to a location to know what is occurring there, or to influence events there. Jesus, although expressing the Christ of God, also worked through a personality and a physical body. He was with dear friends and one of them, Lazarus, was in need of intercession.

> **Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? (11:38—40)**

Perhaps Jesus was gathering His forces in preparation to speak the word of Life. At least there was no hesitation, because He commanded that the cave be unsealed. Martha confirmed that Lazarus had been out of his body for four days and that a strong odor would be evident. This seems to confirm that Lazarus had been sick and that, even though he was still tied to the body by a flow of soul force, he was not in superconsciousness. Had he but been in the breathless state of superconsciousness his body would have been perfectly maintained, even though in a condition of suspended animation. Yogis, for instance, have been observed to be without vital signs while experiencing transcendental states of consciousness. When this occurs, the body is energized due to subtle flows of prana, or life-force.

Jesus, now ready to intercede, reminded Martha that if she, and others, would only believe, the glory of God could be made manifest to them. We know that He was not in need of Martha's faith in order to do what had to be done; it seems as though He was chiding her, reminding her of the truth.

> **Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me. (11: 41, 42)**

One might lift up his eyes to heaven, if one assumed that heaven was at a higher elevation. One in the Yoga tradition would explain, however, that the lifting up of the eyes referred to Jesus turning his attention to the spiritual eye center, between the eyebrows, the connecting point between Cosmic Life and individualized life. The spiritual eye is the positive pole of the *medulla oblongata* at the base of the brain, through which soul force enters the body. Jesus had no need to verbalize His gratitude, because He knew Himself to be one with God. He did it, He said, that those standing nearby might be able to share in the experience and have their faith nourished.

> **And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. (11: 43, 44)**

When Jesus commanded Lazarus to "come forth," His words and His intention pierced the consciousness of Lazarus and activated his soul force. He then emerged from the cave wrapped in the burial clothes. Just as the Christ of God can command souls, so the Christ of God can awaken man from

the sleep of mortality. Just as Lazarus was called back into his body from the condition referred to as death, so can all men be called from darkness to light, from unconsciousness to consciousness, from unknowingness to perfect knowledge. It is recorded that many, upon witnessing the miracle, believed in the reality of the Christ of God. Some did not, but such is the way of conditioned mind.

> **But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we (do)? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and the nation. (11: 47, 48)**

The effect upon the Sanhedrin, the supreme council and highest ecclesiastical and judicial tribunal of the ancient Jewish nation, was such that they made a decision. The rulers felt frustrated and expressed the fear that all the people might come to believe in Jesus, that He was truly the Messiah. The problem was that if popular support went to Jesus, the rulers reasoned, the Romans would consider it an act of political revolution. They said (11:48): "If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him and the Romans shall come and take away both our place (temple) and our nation." Under the Romans, since the time of Julius Caesar, they had enjoyed certain privileges as "the nation of the Jews." One high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, offered a solution to the problem (11:49, 50): "Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and the whole nation perish not." In other words, he said, "You don't understand the obvious, that we must consider the most useful solution for all of us. Put Jesus to death and the people will be able to continue in their normal social and cultural ways, without threat of political turmoil and loss of freedom."

It is written (11:53) that from that day forward they

counseled among themselves to plan on the procedure for ridding themselves of this threat to their political stability. Jesus then "went into the country near to the wilderness" and there remained with His disciples. The Passover was near, and many people went to Jerusalem before the Passover, in order to purify themselves. The chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where Jesus was, that person should report the fact so that He might be arrested.

Chapter twelve opens with Jesus going to Bethany. There He had supper with friends, including Lazarus, whom He had earlier restored to active life. Martha served the meal. Mary her sister took a pound of spikenard ointment and used some of it to anoint the feet of Jesus, wiping His feet with her hair. Spikenard ointment is an extract of the spikenard plant, valued for its aromatic qualities.

> **Then saith one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray Him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. (12: 4–6)**

Judas Iscariot is portrayed as the one who will later betray Jesus by telling the authorities where to find Him. Spikenard oil was costly because it had to be imported from northern India. The quantity mentioned would have cost the equivalent of about sixty dollars. No wonder Judas, being the treasurer (having charge of the bag from which expenses were disbursed), had his eye on the possible money to be obtained from the sale of the oil! It is of interest that, since an enlightened master can surely know who is trustworthy and who is not, Jesus still allowed Judas to handle money matters. A master works with souls to assist them in the direction of their higher good, and sometimes he will put up with ineptitude, and even deceit, if

there is the slightest possibility that a person may be changed for the better. Jesus cut Judas short with the following:

> **Let her alone: against the day of My burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but Me ye have not always. (12:7,8)**

To wash and cleanse the feet of a guest was a traditional custom practiced during the time of Jesus. After a guest had perhaps walked a considerable distance, either barefoot or in sandals, such consideration shown was the hospitable gesture of a gracious host or hostess. Mary had been saving the oil for future use, for the time when Jesus might depart from His body and the body be laid to rest. That she took a portion of this oil to anoint His feet was a personal matter to her, and Judas had no right to interfere.

The "poor" here referred to may have meant those in lack who were recipients of charitable acts, or it may have referred to a community of monastics which existed at the time; they were referred to as "God's poor" because of their vows of poverty. This sect is known to have been involved with prayer, meditation, and an examination of the esoteric, the inner truths of life. At any rate, Jesus stated, "You will always have others in need with you, but I will not always be with you in the flesh."

In verse nine we are informed that people came to where Jesus was staying, not only to see Him, but to see Lazarus, who had recently been revived. The chief priests, seeing that Lazarus was a vivid reminder to the people of the miracle-working power of Jesus, thought of also putting Lazarus to death.

The next day, Jesus went to Jerusalem, where a large number of pilgrims had gathered for a feast and to celebrate. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a young ass (any one of a number of small, hardy animals, such as a donkey). The believers among the crowd hailed Him as the "King of Israel" because they were looking forward to such a Messiah, and also because they had heard of the miracle connected with Lazarus.

There were people there who had come to the feast from Greece, and they wanted to see Jesus. Philip and Andrew, two disciples, carried the request to Jesus.

> **And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour. Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. (12:23–27)**

John has Jesus explain here that He knows the time is almost present when a final initiation will be experienced. The personality-self must be willing to be sacrificed if the eternal divine Self is to be permanently glorified. One who clings to the personality-self, and the habits of it, will lose it eventually. "Hate" is a strong word to use; perhaps the ideal is that one should be so attracted to the Godly life that the outer will hold little attraction. Then one can live in the world with understanding but without attachments and the consequent problems of such attachments. If any person would serve the Christ of God, let him serve others, as do the divine examples who come to show us the way. When we serve in the correct way, a greater measure of the activity of God as the Holy Spirit is evident in our lives.

Jesus, at this point, is portrayed as preferring not to have to undergo the challenge before Him, yet knowing it to be destined.

> **Father, glorify Thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified It, and will glorify It again. The people therefore, that**

stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to Him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. (12:28—32)

Turning quickly from thoughts of His impending challenge, Jesus prayed, "Father, glorify Thy name." In other words, "Let Your will be done." The Christ of God can do nothing less than the will of God. A "voice from heaven" then manifested; that is, a powerful spiritual incident occurred, perhaps due to the deep communion of Jesus with the Cosmic Self. Some thought they heard the sound of thunder, while others claimed that a voice spoke. Jesus explained that He did not need to hear a divine voice because He was one with God, and that the manifestation had occurred for the sake of those who were standing nearby. Man is always self-judged, and the events about to unfold were to be the occasion for many to examine themselves and discover varying realities. The "prince of this world" is maya, the fabric of nature which blinds the soul. When illusion is cast out, the soul awakens to the realization of its innate divinity. One who is "lifted up from the earth" literally experiences freedom from all bondage; he is then able to be that point of contact through which others can be spiritually quickened and experience liberation of consciousness.

The people answered Him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever; and how sayest Thou, the Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the Light with you. Walk while ye have the Light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the Light, believe in the Light, that ye may be the children of Light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them. (12:34—36)

When asked just who the Son of man was, Jesus plainly said that It was the true Light of God. He went on to say, "Walk in My consciousness while you have the opportunity. In this way you will not become deluded again. While you live out of My consciousness you may be known as the children of Light."

Even though Jesus advised the people correctly, not all could understand His teaching or be true to their calling. It is recorded (12:42) that many believed in Him but did not publicly admit their belief because they were afraid of being punished by the ecclesiastical leaders of the time. It is further said of such persons (12:43), "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

> **Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on Me, believeth not on Me, but on Him that sent Me. And he that seeth Me seeth Him that sent Me. I am come a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear My words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak. (12:44–50)**

One who understands and accepts the Christ of God as the operant influence in creation also understands and accepts the fact that there is That larger aspect behind the outer expression. Since the Christ is God in expression, one who discerns the nature of the Christ intuitively discerns the Reality of the Godhead. The "words spoken" by Jesus conveyed the

principles by which persons who are spiritually asleep can be stirred and awakened to a higher way of life. If the principles are not accepted, the Christ of God does not judge or condemn; each person will eventually confront his day of self-honesty, when he must examine his life and determine his future actions. Jesus was not active in His ministry to say merely what would satisfy His listeners; He was involved with the process of calling souls which were ready to respond, inviting them to hear the true teaching which could release them from all restrictions and afford them freedom in God. His was not a popular message; His was a direct challenge to hear the word and then make a decision. No wonder He was a challenge to those with vested interests, and to those who were somewhat comfortable and secure in their existing life patterns.

The thirteenth chapter opens with Jesus taking supper with His disciples; it was a special occasion planned by Jesus, so that He might have an opportunity to be alone with His disciples. A custom honored in some mystical traditions is that of the guru or spiritual master inviting his close disciples to share a final meal with him, before the master concludes his ministry. Gurus in India have been known to do this, and many Buddhist masters have also been known to observe this custom. This final occasion of fellowship can provide an opportunity for special spiritual instruction which can be beneficial to the disciples after their guru has departed from their physical presence. In verse one of chapter thirteen, we read, "When Jesus knew that His hour was come, that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." The Greek expression (*eis telos*) may also mean, "unto the utmost."

> **And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him; (13:2)**

John, in recollecting the events, felt this to be the occasion of Judas' final decision to tell the authorities where Jesus could be found. John portrays Judas as being deluded, since he refers to the "devil" as being influential in the mind and emotional state of Judas.

Jesus then stood up from the supper table, laid aside His outer garments, and took a towel and girded His body with it. He then poured water into a container and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel with which He had girded Himself. When He came to Simon Peter, Peter said, "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" Jesus answered:

> **What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, if I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me. Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. (13:7—9)**

The washing of the disciples' feet by Jesus was a demonstration that one who is called of God should be willing to serve others. Peter did not feel worthy of having Jesus wash his feet. Concerning his resistance to the process, Jesus told Peter plainly, "If I do not wash you, you can no longer have a relationship with me." To that statement Peter impulsively replied that if He wanted to, Jesus could also wash his hands and head and he would not object. There is symbolism in this act of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples. He was the host at the supper; He had called them together. The host is the one to provide hospitality to the guests. There were no servants present because the gathering was a private one. Jesus was saying, through His actions, "You are My guests and I will see to your comfort and well-being," but He was doing more than this; He was sharing His intimate life with His disciples and preparing them for a major spiritual awakening which would take place after His resurrection.

Jesus knew the secret thoughts of Judas, because He said

to the disciples (13:11): "Ye are clean, but not all." He was referring to the condition of inner impurity present in Judas. Jesus then put on His garments and sat down to speak:

> . . .He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither He that is sent greater than He that sent Him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. (13:12—17)

Jesus explained that He was sent of God and was, therefore, God's servant. He stressed that one who represents God should serve others and should not be boastful, nor should he seek personal power or public acclaim.

> I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me. Now I tell you, before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me. When Jesus had said this, He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me. (13:18—21)

Jesus was saying, "I am speaking about all of you, except one person. I am telling you this so that later, when circumstances reveal the truth of what I am saying, you will have greater faith in My words." John portrays Jesus as referring to scripture (Psalms 41:9): "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." Was Jesus referring to the fact that His

disciples would later go forth to minister? It seems so, because He told them, "He that receives whomever I send, receives Me."

> **Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom He spake. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. (John here refers to himself.) Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom He spake. He (John) then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto Him, Lord, who is it? (13:22–25)**

The occasion was obviously informal, a beautiful occasion for the disciples to be with their guru. The events described at this special supper gathering indicate the closeness of the bond that existed between Jesus and His disciples.

> **Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a sop (bread dipped into wine or broth) when I have dipped it. And when He dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop, Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. (13:26, 27)**

The phrase "Satan entered into him" refers to the fact that Judas, aware that his plan was known to Jesus, and not being able to humble himself and ask for forgiveness, fled. Jesus' words were a challenge: "What you are planning to do, do it quickly!" Judas could have changed his mind and had his heart transformed at that very moment, but his ego-drive was too strong. An earlier verse informs us that he had malice in his heart (12:6, the occasion when he inquired as to why the ointment of spikenard was not sold for good money instead of being used to show Jesus expected hospitality).

No one else at the table (13:28, 29) knew why Jesus spoke to Judas the way that He did. They did not know what Jesus

knew. Perhaps they had not been observant, or perhaps they lacked intuitive insight. Some of them thought because Judas "had the bag" and was the treasurer for the group, that Jesus meant that Judas should go to buy more provisions for the feast, or perhaps give some money to the poor.

> **He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night. Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him...Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me: and as I said unto the Jews (the rulers), whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another. (13: 30—35)**

The time had come for God to fully express His influential power and glory through the Son, the Christ of God. We do not know what Jesus meant by the expression "little children." He may have been saying, "My precious little ones, whom I love as your own parents love you." He did say to them, "What I have to do and experience is Mine alone. But I will give you useful advice; as I have loved you, love each other. As you do this, others will see that you are indeed true disciples of God."

> **Simon Peter said unto Him, Lord, whither goest Thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards. Peter said unto Him, Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for My sake? Verily, verily, I say unto you, the cock (rooster) shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice. (13:36—38)**

Jesus knew He was moving in the direction of the completion of His mission. He told Simon Peter that he, too, would complete his mission and rest in God. Peter, perhaps intimating the challenge before Jesus, offered to go with Him and die on His behalf if necessary. The Christ of God always knows the inner condition of a person, and Jesus, demonstrating His knowledge of the future, told His disciple that before the rooster raised his voice at the very next dawning of the day, Peter would have cause to deny his relationship with his guru.

In chapter fourteen Jesus continues to instruct His disciples, and to prepare them for the time nearing when they will be without His physical presence. He speaks these words of comfort and assurance:

> **Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. (14:1—4)**

Knowing of the events before Him, Jesus still speaks in a confident manner to His disciples. He knows exactly what is to happen, and He will walk through the drama as a conscious witness, as well as the central participant. In God's house, in the infinite field of Consciousness, there are many levels, and an almost infinite number of planes and dimensions. When souls leave the body they flow to that plane of Consciousness which is compatible with their own spiritual condition. There are murky planes; there are planes where souls can work out their karma; there are clear astral realms, and there is heaven, the realm of the shining beings. "Beyond" the true heaven is the Transcendental Field, the infinite sphere of unconditioned Beingness.

Jesus told His disciples that He was going to "prepare a place" for them. It seems to me that He was saying He was going to prepare *them*, in consciousness, to be all that they could be. The subtle spheres already exist and do not need to be prepared. Jesus was preparing His disciples for their moment of greater spiritual awakening. He wanted them to be aware like He was, to consciously know their true nature. The Christ of God is, of course, the real nature of every person, even if that person does not presently know it. It is the guru's role to prepare his disciples, and to infuse them with a portion of God-consciousness.

Thomas said (14:5): "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Jesus answered:

> **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him. (14:6, 7)**

Earlier, Jesus washed His disciples' feet. He was through this act sharing Himself, and giving them an example to follow, to be good servants of God. Now He speaks from the level of Christ-consciousness, and He shares with His disciples esoteric, inner truths. The Christ aspect of God is the way to soul freedom. The Christ aspect of God is the revealed truth of God. The Christ aspect of God is the operant life of the worlds. When souls awaken from mortal (conditioned) consciousness, they experience an expansion of awareness. First they experience cosmic consciousness, attunement with the universe, and they know the universe to be of one essence. Next, they experience themselves as the Christ of God, the aspect of the Godhead which is involved with all creation. Finally, they experience the God nature, which is transcendent to all relative manifestation. Each soul, being a specialized expression of the Godhead, is already omnipresent and already possesses all of the attributes and capacities of the Godhead.

Philip said (14:8), "Lord, shew us the Father, and it suf-

ficeth us." Philip was saying, "Reveal the true nature of God to us." Jesus responded:

> **Have I been so long time with you, and yet thou hast not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake. (14:9—11)**

Since Jesus had been teaching His disciples, and had been demonstrating powers and abilities through His actions, Philip, had he been more discerning, would have by this time discovered the real nature of God. Jesus here tells Philip that if he is not yet able to discern the real nature of the Christ of God, he should at least believe because of his having been a witness to divine power in action.

> **Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it. (14:12—14)**

One who has faith, and who understands the true nature of the Christ of God, is able to demonstrate divine abilities, as did Jesus. Jesus was perhaps here telling His disciples that the day would come when they would do even greater works than He had done up to this time—not that their works would be any greater in quality, but that they would be more extensive because the disciples' ministries would be of longer duration. Man's ability to cause effects is determined by his

state of consciousness. Speaking out of conditioned consciousness, one will see the effects of conditioned consciousness. Speaking from the level of Christ-consciousness, one will see the effects of the Christ of God upon the environment. To "ask in the name of Christ" is to ask while experiencing Christ-consciousness.

> **If ye love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. (14:15—17)**

A person who respects his teacher will do his teacher's bidding. A disciple who loves his guru will do his guru's bidding. In abiding by the guru's teaching, one prepares himself to receive all of the realization of which he is capable. The Comforter (the Holy Spirit) is That Spirit of truth which sustains and nourishes, and Jesus promised that the disciples would experience the Spirit of truth when they were receptive to It. Those of the world, those who are not yet spiritually quickened, cannot know the Spirit of truth because they lack intuitive perception. The Life of God indwells every person, but he must acknowledge and experience this Life before transformation can take place.

> **I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you. He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. (14:18—21)**

According to Scriptural account, Jesus spent time with His disciples after He resurrected His body. But there is a deeper significance here; a disciple who is attuned to his guru's consciousness receives a flow of force from the guru which, in turn, has its origin in the field of God. Again Jesus reminded the disciples that they should live according to His teachings, if they would remain in tune with Him and with God. With such attunement the Christ of God can more easily express through the disciple on the path.

Another disciple named Judas (not Judas Iscariot, who was to play the role of betraying Jesus) asked Jesus how it was that He would manifest to them and not to the world. Jesus responded:

> **If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him. He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings: and the word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (14:23—26)**

The teachings of a fully illumined guru are not his personal teachings; they are always a restatement, perhaps in different words, of that which is essentially true. Truth does not have its origins with teachers; truth has its origins in the Godhead. The Comforter, the Holy Ghost (Spirit), expresses the will of God through the Christ aspect of God. When one experiences the awakening of soul forces, one is taught from within, as revelation after revelation unfolds in consciousness.

> **Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye**

have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence. (14:27—31)

At this final gathering with His disciples, Jesus took them into His confidence. He instructed them, He blessed them, He reassured them, and He told them of events yet to unfold so that they would be prepared. The "prince of this world" is a reference to deluded consciousness and to the fact that He was soon to be betrayed. Of course, He was not really betrayed, because He had earlier instructed Judas Iscariot to go and do what he was planning. Jesus could have left the area and hidden Himself, but He chose not to do so, inwardly willing to flow along with events as they were to unfold. Deluded consciousness was not a part of the consciousness of Jesus. Others might act out of ignorance, but He would act only out of understanding.

As chapter fifteen begins, Jesus is still talking to His disciples. We are not told, either in the last verse of chapter fourteen or in the opening verse of chapter fifteen, whether they remained a while longer in the room, as He spoke, or whether they continued their spiritual fellowship after they departed, at some secluded place.

I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. (15:1—3)

Jesus prepared the disciples for the beautifully phrased esoteric teaching which was to follow. He told the disciples that they were now cleansed of misunderstanding, and thus ready to experience the fruits of the spiritual life.

> **Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. (15:4—6)**

Souls are extensions of God, but if souls are not in harmony with God's will they cannot experience God's influence as strongly as they would if they were in harmony with God's will. A grapevine makes possible the bearing of grapes by the branches of the vine. If a branch does not receive nourishment from the vine, it soon withers and dies. In the same way, man's spiritual life diminishes when, for one reason or another, he remains out of tune and out of harmony with the Christ of God.

> **If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples. As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love. If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. (15:7—11)**

A guru, if the disciple is receptive, infuses the disciple with

God-consciousness. So long as the disciple lives the ideal life and remains attuned to the flow of power from the Source, his life will be fruitful. During this interlude with those who were to be vehicles of the Spirit of truth, Jesus went straight to the heart of the guru-disciple relationship. He emphasized that He did not expect them to be mere would-be followers, but dynamic examples and instruments through which lives could be changed.

> **This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. (15:12—14)**

It is not common for one to be called to literally lay down his life, to die, for the sake of his friends. But the sharing of life, the sometimes necessary making of sacrifices in order to assist others, is an indication of true love, of true caring. Jesus said, in effect, "If you continue in the ways which I have taught you, you are My friends indeed, and I will give you My all."

> **Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you. (15:15)**

Jesus told His disciples that theirs was a relationship of a special character. He invited them into His consciousness, to share His understanding and His mission. He told them that He held nothing back from them, that He was sharing with them all He knew and all He was. A disciple must earn this special relationship, by his devotion to duty and by preparing himself, both through spiritual practices and attention to the guidelines which assist in steady growth and psychological health.

Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you. (15:16)

Jesus informed His disciples that their relationship with Him was a matter of spiritual destiny, and not of their own choosing. Jesus chose them because He could see into their minds and hearts, into their very souls, and knew they were qualified to respond to His teachings and to go forth into the world to extend the ministry. He said, in effect, "I have chosen and ordained you, so that you might be effective in the world, and so that the results of your work will endure."

These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of this world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me. (15: 17–21)

Jesus knew that His disciples, having been ordained to go into the world to tell others of His message, would meet with opposition and even be persecuted for their efforts. People who are set in their ways, who fear change, often resent those who set a better example. The disciples had been lifted above worldly (conditioned) consciousness, because it was their destiny to be so lifted and because they were called to God's service. Jesus also said that the disciples would meet some who would accept the teachings.

> **If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth Me hateth My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law; They hated Me without a cause. (15:22—25)**

Referring to those who had witnessed His ministry but who would not accept Him or His teachings, Jesus said that if He had not spoken the truth to them, and had not given them the opportunity to see miracles, they would not be experiencing the misfortune of having to justify their personal views. Having had the opportunity to see, and to accept His teachings, their spiritual condition was the worse because they were denying the very thing that could be the means to their spiritual awakening and liberation of consciousness.

Jesus then again reassured His disciples with the following words:

> **But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning. (15:26,27)**

The Godhead extends Itself as the Christ of God and as the Holy Spirit. Just as the Christ of God bears witness to the existence of God, so the Holy Spirit bears witness (testifies) to the existence of the Christ. Jesus told His disciples that their lives would be a witness to others that an operant spiritual Power exists. He confided to His disciples that they had been with Him from the beginning. Not merely with Him during His brief earthly ministry up to this point, they had coexisted with Him in the bosom of the Father before the worlds were

framed. This is true of all souls, but only those who consciously know it can demonstrate the capacities of God in their lives.

In chapter Sixteen Jesus continues to teach His disciples:

> **These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor Me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. (16:1—4)**

Here was no easy challenge for the disciples. They were not being sent out merely to establish branch centers in friendly communities. They were being sent out into the world to teach an unfamiliar and radical doctrine, and to put their lives on the line in the process. Jesus told the disciples that up until now it was not necessary for them to be told these things, because He had been with them and the public's attention had been focused on Him, rather than on the disciples.

> **But now I go My way to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. (16:5—7)**

Jesus chided His disciples because, after having been told by Him of the challenges they would face, they were lost in

their own thoughts and feelings, and so preoccupied with themselves that none bothered to ask Him about His future. Jesus knew that so long as the disciples had His physical presence they would be inclined to look to it rather than to the omnipresent Spirit of the Christ of God. In effect, He was saying, "My outer work is about to be concluded. From now on I will be expressive as a spiritual force without using this physical body. Furthermore, you also will become conduits through which the Christ of God will influence others and the world."

> **And when He (the Spirit of truth) is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of unrighteousness, and of judgement: Of sin, because they believe not on Me; of unrighteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; Of judgement, because the prince of this world is judged. (16:8—11)**

We will learn later how the disciples changed dramatically after they experienced spiritual baptism. During the time now under examination, Jesus was still preparing them for the higher initiation to come. He also told them that as a result of the influence of the Spirit of truth through the disciples that many in the world would be convinced of the teaching Jesus shared. Righteousness would overcome unrighteousness, and darkness would be dispelled from human consciousness.

> **I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you. (16:12—14)**

Even though Jesus shared as much as He could with His disciples, since they had not yet experienced true spiritual

baptism their intuition and dicernment were not yet sufficient for them to be able to comprehend everything He shared. He assured them, however, that after spiritual awakening they would be led of the Spirit of truth, which would reflect the will and the emphasis of the Christ of God. The disciples were assured that "all truth" would be revealed to them and that they would be able to know the future before it unfolded.

> **All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He (the Spirit of truth) shall take of Mine, and shall shew it to you. A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father. (16: 15, 16)**

Jesus spoke to the disciples of His imminent physical departure. He also told them that because He would transcend the material worlds, continuing to exist with God in a spiritual sense, they would again see Him. (They did see Him, after the resurrection; and they comprehended and experienced the Christ of God after their spiritual baptism.) Because the disciples still did not fully understand what He was telling them, Jesus continued:

> **Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned to joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. (16:19–22)**

Jesus compared the challenge before the disciples to that of a woman about to give birth. There may be fear and anxiety before the birth, but there is joy afterward, so that the fear and anxiety are soon forgotten. Jesus promised that the joy they would know would be a special interior joy that could not be taken from them by any person or under any possible circumstance.

> **And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. (16:23,24)**

The disciples did ask Jesus questions after the resurrection but later, after He left them for good, they could not ask questions of Him directly. In telling them that whatever they asked of God while in the experience of Christ consciousness, they would receive, He was referring to their making petitions of God, rather than asking questions; that is, the disciples would have needs which could be met as a result of praying correctly, while in harmony with the Christ of God.

> **These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in My name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. (16:25—28)**

Because Jesus often spoke in obscure and profound statements, hoping that the hearers might grasp His subtle meaning, now that He was preparing the disciples for their important work, He told them that He would soon speak plainly to them.

He went on to say that He would no longer need to pray for the disciples, but that they would be able to pray themselves, in direct communion with the Godhead. They had passed the test; they had faith in the true nature of Jesus and they were ready to take the next step, that of moving from faith to realization, from belief to certain knowledge. Jesus stated clearly that He was fully conscious of the fact that He had come from the realm of the Godhead to take physical form. Now that His earthly work was about to be concluded, He knew He would return to the Source from whence He had come.

The disciples affirmed their faith in Jesus (16:30), acknowledging that they fully believed in Him when He told them that He had come from the Godhead. Jesus then said:

> **Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (16: 31—33)**

The disciples were now strengthened by their conviction, but a time of challenge was soon to face them. They would scatter when Jesus was arrested; this they would be forced to do if they were to avoid trouble and be able to carry out their respective ministries. Their leaving Him to face His own challenge would not be of great concern to Jesus, because He was fully aware of His mission, and of the fact that the supporting influence of God would never leave Him. How could the supporting influence of God leave Him?—He was an extension of the Godhead, and He knew it.

All souls are extensions of the Godhead, but when they are not conscious of this fact they feel separate from God. Feeling apart from God, a person is fearful and at the mercy of both inner and outer conflicts and challenges.

The seventeenth chapter begins with Jesus taking some of His disciples to the Mount of Olives, then to the garden of Gethsemane, where He prayed what is referred to by many Christians as "the great prayer." While He included Himself in the prayer petition, for the most part He prayed for others. As an *avatara*, a divine incarnation, Jesus did not have to pray for Himself, because He knew His relationship with the Godhead. His function was to work for the spiritual awakening of all mankind, as well as to work with a few special disciples and assist them in the direction of their soul liberation.

Preceding Gospel accounts have Jesus going to the garden to pray. John's Gospel tells us that Jesus went to the garden after He prayed. It is not extraordinary that a sequence of events would be narrated differently by different people. When writing the Gospels, the disciples were recalling the circumstances which took place. Also, during the time written about, they had been under great emotional pressure because of the intimate sharing with their guru and because of what was unfolding. Several incidents related in the Gospels are told with variations from one Gospel to another. What is important in the Gospel accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus is not so much their historical accuracy, as rather the power of the message and its redeeming influence. There are many people who know much about the "letter of the word" (about Scripture), but there are not many who *know* the Word. There are many people who know much about the nature of God, and the Christ of God, but who do not *know* God, and the Christ of God.

A careful study of the Scriptures can be extremely useful. Knowledge can be acquired, faith quickened, and soul qualities awakened. The next step is for one to enter into a program of study and application which will enable him to experience inner change and true spiritual awakening. It is useless, in the long run, to argue over the many points that can arise when we attempt to analyze the Gospels; such argument has been a major factor in the schisms leading to the many Christian sects

which now abound. It is not uncommon for self-professed Christians to affirm that all who have accepted the divinity of Jesus are brothers and sisters in Him, while at the same time stating that many of their brothers and sisters are in grave error relative to what Jesus really taught and stood for. The major consideration should not be who is "right" or "wrong" but that all awaken and actually experience the truth of Life, so clearly and beautifully expressed in the Gospels.

> **These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee. As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent. (17:1—3)**

The words spoken by Jesus referred to in this opening sentence of Chapter Seventeen are the final words spoken in the previous chapter (16:33). Heaven, of course, is not above us; that is, heaven is not in the sky. Lifting up one's eyes during prayer is a way of transcending body identification in order to more easily commune with God, the Larger True Self of us.

The "Son" Jesus prayed to be glorified was the Christ of God and, as a result of the Christ of God being revealed to others, God would be made more evident in the lives of men. God, as the Christ, has power over all material things, and the Christ of God, if received by the seeking soul, can cause the soul to realize its eternal nature. When one knows the reality of God, and the reality of the Christ of God, one knows his own true divine nature as immortal spirit.

> **I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me with Thine own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was. (17:4, 5)**

Jesus never asked for personal praise or recognition as a human being. His only desire, and His only function, was to let the reality of God be evident in His life and in His works. Now, a phase is about to be completed; the immediate work is done. There is more to follow, after the resurrection, but preparations have been made and the spiritual foundation laid. What higher prayer could anyone utter than to ask to be again fully conscious of the divine nature, as it was with one before moving out from the unmanifest Field of Consciousness? Before the worlds were framed, each soul rested in the bosom of God, as a part of the Godhead. May we each aspire to experience, when our earthly work is done, that glory which was ours before the world was!

> **I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them. (17:6—10)**

First Jesus prayed for the welfare of His disciples, those whom God called from worldly involvements to minister to the world. God always gives responsive disciples to great masters who have a true mission. These disciples "receive the words" or instructions regarding the laws of mind and consciousness; they believe, and they are then able to go forth in the true spirit of God to share light with others. Jesus, of course, was working with planetary consciousness, but His

first prayer was for the disciples, both because He loved them and because it was through them that the world would learn the Good News, the way to freedom in God as Jesus taught it. Jesus, true to the guru-disciple tradition, acknowledged that the disciples were from God and that He (Jesus) was but doing God's will in working with them.

> **And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name; those that Thou gavest Me I kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. (17:11, 12)**

The disciples were able to receive the inner meaning of Jesus' teaching, even though they were still in human consciousness and not yet able to follow all His personal instructions to the letter. They were informed of God through their recognition of the Christ of God. Jesus prayed that they might be "kept" or protected, even as He watched over them and protected them. The only one of His close disciples who was not at the time fully receptive to Him was Judas Iscariot, and Jesus knew that Judas was destined never to be close to Him, because He refers to Judas as "the son of perdition." The word "perdition" refers to a condition of being lost, or ruined; a condition of non-purity. The final words in verse twelve refer to the scripture having to be fulfilled. This may have been inserted later to make a stronger case for the uniqueness of Jesus, in order to bolster the faith of new converts, or it may be an indication that the entire drama was being played out according to both a divine and a karmic plan.

> **And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not**

that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is Truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. (17:13—19)

Even during this hour of momentary challenge, Jesus expressed an inward spiritual joy, because of His realization and knowledge of the truth of Life. His earnest wish was that the disciples be also established in this inward joy, the blissful experience which transcends sense-related experience. Jesus not only gave His disciples the words of truth; He also gave them His own consciousness and reality. The Word, the light, power, and reality of God, was transmitted to the disciples through the vehicle of Jesus. Because of this they were no longer accepted by persons still in conditioned human consciousness (the world). Jesus did not desire that the disciples be removed from worldly involvement, only that they be protected from contamination, because their inward purity was necessary for their own liberation and for the work yet before them. To sanctify is to make holy, to consecrate, to purify and free from all that is not in accord with divine purposes. Jesus maintained His spiritual purity, and He desired that His disciples also remain inwardly pure. To be sanctified through the Word is to be cleansed as a result of the influential reality of the Christ of God.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be

> **made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me. (17:20—23)**

Jesus did not have to purify Himself, because the Christ of God is always pure, but He did need to dedicate Himself to His ministry, His ministry of sharing the reality of God with the world. Being an *avatara*, Jesus did not need to come into the world for any personal reason. He came to assist seeking souls in the direction of soul freedom. For this reason He also sent His disciples into the world. Now, in this portion of the "great prayer," Jesus prays for those who will be reached through the ministries of His disciples. His prayer for all is that they be of one accord, in harmony with the teachings and in communion with God.

> **Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them (17:24—26)**

In the closing words of this prayer, Jesus expresses His desire, His natural and loving inclination, for those who are attracted to the Christ of God to be able to experience the fullness of God even as He does. He wishes them to experience the full glory and power of God. Emphasis is here made on love, not as the world understands love, but that true love which admits no differences, only communion and oneness.

Chapter Eighteen opens with Jesus going with all His disciples over a brook, a small stream, and into a garden. Jesus

and His disciples often came to this garden, and Judas therefore knew where to find Him (18:2). Judas arrived with a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees; they carried torches and lanterns to light the way, and also were armed with weapons. Jesus, knowing what was to unfold, approached the men and asked (18:4) "Whom seekest ye?" Upon being told by representatives of the group that it was Jesus of Nazareth whom they sought, Jesus said, "I am He."

As soon as Jesus said, "I am He," those of the group standing nearest to Him moved back. Perhaps they were surprised to find Jesus approaching them so openly, instead of fleeing. Jesus reaffirmed His identity and asked that His disciples be allowed to depart (18:8). What was then to take place was for Jesus to face alone; His disciples must remain safe, in order to be able to fulfill their teaching mission. But Simon Peter, being protective of Jesus, drew his sword and cut off the right ear of Malchus, servant of the high priest. Jesus then said to Peter, "Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink?" (18:11)

The band of captors then bound Jesus and took Him to Annas, father-in-law to Caiaphas, the high priest at the time. Historians tell us that the priesthood of the day was corrupt and defensive of its power and authority. It was Caiaphas who had counseled the Jewish rulers that it was necessary (expedient) that one man die to please the people, that is, to settle the political unrest that had been stirring. The plan was to put some one potential troublemaker to death as an example to indicate that the authorities would no longer tolerate any dissension.

Simon Peter followed Jesus to the palace of the high priest, as did another disciple. The second, unnamed disciple was well known to Caiaphas, and he therefore went into the palace with Jesus. But Peter remained outside with the servants and officers, near the outer door, and warmed himself at a bed of coals which had been prepared against the cold. The second disciple (perhaps John) came out and spoke to the woman who attended the door to the palace. She in turn spoke to

Peter: "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" Peter replied, "I am not," thereby denying his relationship with Jesus (18:17) Peter's denial was not prompted by fear; had he been afraid, he would not have been present at all. He was simply avoiding trouble. Meanwhile, in the palace, the high priest questioned Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine:

> **Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou Me? ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them:behold, they know what I said. (18:20, 21)**

To put aside any discussion of His being the leader of a revolutionary movement, Jesus affirmed that His teaching was public knowledge and that even the political leaders knew what He taught because they also frequented the places where He taught. One of the officers standing nearby, thinking that the words of Jesus were impudent because of the stature of the high priest, slapped Jesus with his hand. (18:22)

> **Jesus answered him, if I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou Me? (18:23)**

Annas had sent Jesus to Caiaphas. Those who stood outside with Peter by the fire asked him, "Art not thou also one of His disciples?" Peter then, for the second time, denied any connection. Then, one of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had severed, asked, "Did I not see thee in the garden with Him?" For the third time, Peter denied any relationship with Jesus. Immediately, the sound of a cock crowing could be heard in the distance. (18:27)

Jesus was then led from Caiaphas to the hall of judgment. It was early in the day now, and the others did not go into the judgment hall because they were not permitted to do so

before partaking of the Passover meal. Pilate, Rome's representative, asked, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" (18:29)

When told that Jesus was causing problems with the people, Pilate advised them to take Jesus and judge Him according to their own laws. Their response was that they had no legal right, under Roman law, to put anyone to death. The political faction of the day, under the influence of a corrupt priesthood, wanted Jesus out of the way, and since Roman law forbade them to do anything harsh, they wanted to pass the responsibility over to Pilate, as Rome's representative. This presented a problem to Pilate, because he was not interested in becoming involved with internal political matters. He returned into the judgment hall and asked Jesus, "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" (18:33)

The common people, thinking that perhaps Jesus was the promised Messiah, thought that He also might truly be their temporal king. Jesus responded to Pilate, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?"

Pilate responded by informing Jesus (18:35) that it was the chief priests who had told him this story. Then Jesus replied clearly:

> **My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews, but now is My kingdom not from hence. (18:36)**

Again Jesus explained that His domain was not in this world, that He was only concerned with the spiritual welfare of souls. If He had been interested in affairs of state He would have armed all of His followers and stood His ground against His accusers. He asserted that His sphere of influence was not from "hence," that is, not from a worldly source or origin.

Pilate asked Him, "Art Thou a king then?" and Jesus responded:

> **Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world,**

that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice. (18:37)

Again, in plain language, Jesus explained, "You are the one who asserts that I am a king. The real purpose for My coming into the world is to reveal the truth about the nature of God. Every person receptive to this teaching understands it."

Then Pilate, finding no fault in Jesus, went out to the priests and said, "I find in Him no fault at all. But ye have a custom (on this day), that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" (18:39) It seems that Pilate was mocking the priests because he himself did not believe that Jesus intended that He should be known as an earthly king. The priests asked Pilate to release to them, not Jesus, but a robber named Barabbas.

Chapter Nineteen opens with the Roman soldiers taunting Jesus. They made Him their plaything, and put upon His head a crown made of thorns, then placed over His shoulders a royal purple robe. They mocked Him by calling out to Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

Pilate again went out to the priests and said, "Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him." (19:4) Jesus came forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, and Pilate said to the priests, "Behold the man!" In other words, "Look at this man!"

The chief priests and the officers with them cried out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Pilate exclaimed, washing his hands of the matter, "Take ye Him, and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him." (19:6) Pilate did not want to give the order to have Jesus crucified, and he knew that the priesthood had no authority to do so. Had the priests had the nerve to pass sentence, Jesus would have been stoned, and not crucified, because that was the custom of the ruling body at that time.

Pilate then took Jesus back into the judgment hall but Jesus, for one reason or another, would not answer Pilate's

questions at first. Pilate said to Him, "Speakest Thou not unto me; Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and power to release Thee?" (19:10) Jesus replied:

> **Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin. (19:11)**

Jesus was here telling Pilate that he (Pilate) had only limited power. His role was that he was being used as an instrument in the unfolding drama. Pilate was also under orders to abide by Roman laws. Jesus explained to him that the greater error had been made by the high priest Caiaphas, because the latter was supposed to teach and uphold the laws of God and should have behaved better.

Pilate continued to remonstrate with the high priests, telling them that they should release Jesus, but they said to Pilate, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar." (19:12) When Pilate heard that, he again went to sit quietly, to think the matter over. Then, once more he offered to release Jesus. He said, while making the offer, "Shall I crucify your king?" It seems that Pilate, knowing that Jesus had no desire for earthly rule, was mocking the high priests, hoping they would be ashamed and allow Jesus to be released. The priests, however, answered, "We have no king but Caesar." (19:15)

Pilate then withdrew from the debate and allowed the soldiers to lead Jesus away. They made Him carry the cross upon which His body would be tried, to Golgotha, "the place of the skulls." There they crucified Him, along with two others, one on either side of Him.

Pilate, apparently hoping to embarrass the high priests, had a signboard made and attached to the cross. Written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin were the words, "Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews." The high priests asked Pilate to change the words to "He said I am king of the Jews." Pilate answered

them, "What I have written, I have written." (19:19–22) Obviously finding the whole drama distasteful, but bound by Roman law and pressured by the high priests who ruled the local people, Pilate still felt that he should push his point home by mocking the high priests.

The soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, divided His clothes into four parts, to share among the four soldiers who had participated. His robe, which was seamless, they did not tear apart, but instead cast lots to see to whom it should go.

It is stated (19:24) that the casting of lots for the robe was in accord with Scriptural prophecy. The reference is to the Twenty-Second Psalm, but a close examination of that Psalm makes it most difficult to believe that it can be taken as being prophetic. It is not unlikely that this reference, and others, were inserted from time to time into the Books of the New Testament in order to lend support and credibility to the ministry of Jesus and the later ministries of His disciples. This hardly seems necessary, in light of the fact that the ministry of Jesus itself revealed the fullness of God! The works of Jesus through which God's power and influence were manifested are proof enough of His reality.

According to John's account, there stood near the cross three women who were close to Jesus. They were Jesus' mother, Mary, His mother's sister (Mary, the wife of Cleophas), and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple standing by "whom He loved" (John), He said to His mother, "Woman, behold thy son!" Then He said to John, "Behold thy mother!" And from that hour, according to the Scripture, (19:27) John took the mother of Jesus into his home to care for her needs.

Then Jesus said, "I thirst." A sponge was dipped into vinegar and raised to His mouth so He could quench His thirst. Jesus then uttered the words, "It is finished," and, dropping His head, He left the physical form.

Because the body of Jesus had the appearance of one dead, it is reported, His legs were not broken by the soldiers, as were the legs of the other two who were also crucified at the same time as Jesus. It is written in this Gospel that one of the sol-

diers pierced His side with a spear to make sure He was dead, and that from the wound issued blood and a watery fluid. (19: 28–34)

Joseph of Arimathaea, a disciple of Jesus, obtained permission from Pilate to take away the body for burial. He did so secretly, in order not to attract the attention of the high priests. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes. The body was wrapped in a linen cloth, with the spices, and placed in a new sepulchre nearby. A large stone was placed at the entrance of the tomb. (19:38–42)

Thus on the hill of Golgotha (called Calvary in Latin) was enacted the final public act which concluded the outward ministry of Jesus. I do not affirm the teaching, popular among many of today's Christians, that Jesus "died for the sins of the world." From the New Testament account we see only evidence that He was crucified because of a then-corrupt priesthood which insisted that He be removed because they feared His popularity with the common people of the time. For a truth student to attempt to believe that all mankind has been given passage to heaven (if only one does believe) because of the ritual death of Jesus, is an impossibility. That there is psychological value in such a teaching for unthinking religious people we cannot debate, however, for if one can accept the premise and thereby accept inner forgiveness for past errors and live a better life, one can indeed experience a degree of freedom, as a result of having renounced guilt and remorse.

Chapter Twenty opens with Mary Magdalene going to the sepulchre early in the morning while it is still dark. There she is amazed to see that the stone has been rolled away from the entrance. Running to Simon Peter and John (the "other disciple, whom Jesus loved"), she said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him." (20:1, 2)

Both disciples ran to the sepulchre, John arriving first (20: 4). Stooping down to peer into the interior, he saw the linen

clothes lying there, but John did not enter the tomb.

When Simon Peter arrived, both disciples entered the sepulchre. There they saw the linen clothes, and the napkin which had been wrapped about the head of Jesus, folded and placed to one side. The disciples then went to their home, but Mary, weeping, looked into the tomb and saw two angels in white, one sitting at the head and the other sitting at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. The angels said to her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" She replied, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." (20:6—13)

The Gospel of Luke (24:4) mentions "two men in shining garments" at the tomb. Mark (16:5) mentions one young man, clothed in a long white garment. Matthew (28:2) tells us that an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, rolled back the rock which had sealed the tomb, and then sat upon the rock, to announce that Jesus was not present in the tomb. All four Gospels vary in their accounts of who first went to the tomb that morning, and what was seen there. But these variances are not a problem, because some of the Gospels were written by persons who heard the story from others. John, on the other hand, claims in His Gospel to have actually been there.

In John's account, after Mary conversed with the angel, she turned around and saw Jesus, but did not recognize Him in the dark of the morning. She supposed Him to be the gardener, and asked Him if he knew where Jesus' body had been taken. When Jesus called to her by name, however, she knew who He was, and apparently reached out to touch Him, for He said to her:

> **Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God. (20:17)**

Mary Magdalene had apparently arrived shortly after Jesus had brought life back into His physical body. Who were the "angels" mentioned in these various accounts? Were they

masters who had come from the inner realms to participate in the restoration of Jesus' body? This is possible. A fully illumined master often has "spiritual friends" who share his or her ministry from the subtle realms. Some historians feel that the "angels" were actually members of the Essene brotherhood, a monastic order which flourished at that time, and with which some say Jesus had a connection.

It may have been that Jesus, in the process of revitalizing the physical body, asked Mary Magdalene not to touch Him because He did not want her to be overcome by the powerful energies which were then coursing through His body. If He had deliberately allowed His body to be injured during the crucifixion ritual, He could have "died" by stopping all vital processes, and then reanimated the body at the chosen time. The fact that Joseph of Arimathaea, a secret disciple of Jesus, provided a "friendly" resting place for the body would have been useful to His purposes. The Greek version of the Gospel has it that Jesus said to Mary, "Stop clinging to Me," that is, "Stop clinging to the form; look to the Divine Reality."

Mary Magdalene then went to the disciples, as instructed by Jesus, testified to having seen and talked with Him, and conveyed His message to them.

That evening, the disciples gathered in a secret place and shut the door in order to be undisturbed. Jesus came and He then showed them His hands and His side where the spear had entered. The disciples "were glad" because of His presence. Jesus again spoke to them, saying:

> **Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so I send you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. (20:21—23)**

Here Jesus is portrayed as having given His disciples a more advanced initiation. Formerly, He had taught by example and by word. Now He "breathed on them"; that is, He transmitted

His spiritual force (the Holy Ghost) and told them that they now had power to release people from their inner restrictions, or to allow those restrictions to remain for a duration, according to the disciples' own intuitive judgment of the needs of each situation. To know what is ultimately good for another person, one must be possessed of intuitive insight.

It is the custom, in some esoteric traditions, for the guru to whisper special instructions into the ear of the disciple during the occasion of initiation, thus literally breathing upon that disciple. What is actually occurring is an infusion of divine force from the master to the disciple; without this, the disciple remains but a teacher. With the infusion of this force, the disciple becomes a vehicle through which the very power of God is communicated to all who are receptive to it.

The disciple Thomas arrived after Jesus had departed and, when told of the event, did not believe what his brother disciples had told him. He wanted proof. Eight days later, when the disciples, including Thomas, were again gathered together, the doors were closed, and Jesus again appeared in their midst. He greeted them with the familiar "Peace be with you." Then He said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side, and be not faithless, but believing." The scars yet remained on the body of Jesus and He invited Thomas to feel His body in order to be convinced. Thomas then believed, and he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God." (20:24—28)

> **Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. (20:29)**

John concludes this chapter by stating that many other signs were given by Jesus to His disciples, which are not recorded in his Gospel.

Chapter Twenty-One opens with Jesus appearing to His disciples near the Sea of Tiberias (another name for the Sea of

Galilee). Simon Peter and some of the other disciples went fishing, but caught nothing that night. When morning came they saw Jesus, standing on the shore. He asked them if they had been successful, and they answered that they had not. He then told them to cast their nets on the right side of the ship and they would be successful. They did as they were told, and netted such a quantity of fish that they were not able to draw the net up into the boat. (21:6)

Making their way to the shore, the disciples saw a fire of coals prepared, and fish laid on the coals, and bread. Jesus invited them to "Come and dine."

After they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" Peter responded that he did indeed love Jesus. Jesus then said to Peter, "Feed My lambs." Twice more Jesus asked the question and twice more Peter answered that he did love Jesus. Jesus responded each time with, "Feed my sheep." Peter was hurt that Jesus should ask him the same question three times, and expressed his feelings to Jesus. Jesus answered him:

> Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. (21:18)

It is John's opinion that Jesus was indirectly telling Peter of his (Peter's) future crucifixion, which tradition claims occurred. This, of course, is the opinion of John long after the conversation recorded took place, after John knew of events which had transpired. Jesus then told Peter, "Follow Me."

Peter noticed John nearby, and asked, "Lord, what shall this man do?" Jesus, not wanting to discuss the matter of John's future, said, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me." (21:19—21)

There was a prevailing belief that Jesus, after His departure from this world, would one day return. Talk about this went

around among the disciples (21:23), and the rumor was spread that Jesus had said that John would not die. This may seem a curious way to conclude a written account of one's experiences with Jesus, who fully embodied the Christ of God, but we must deal with what is available.

John's is the last of the four Gospels, but in the next Book in the New Testament, *The Acts of the Apostles*, the first chapter shares more information about Jesus and His relationships with His disciples.

Acts is considered by Bible historians to have been written by the disciple Luke (source: *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*) as a communication to one Theophilus, but we are not told who this person was.

Luke tells of an incident when the disciples came together with Jesus (1:6) and asked Him, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" Jesus replied:

> **It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (1:7–8)**

Jesus informed His disciples that they would experience an infusion of spiritual influence and, as a result, they would experience the unfoldment of innate soul powers; these powers would enable them to boldly and effectively take the good news to the multitudes. The Christ of God, through the disciples, would extend the ministry to the far ends of the earth.

After speaking with the disciples, Jesus then departed from them. The location of this incident was Mount Olivet, which was "a sabbath day's journey" (1:12) from Jerusalem. This mountain is about 3,000 feet east of Jerusalem, the distance

permitted one to walk on the sabbath day without breaking the Biblical injunction to rest on the sabbath.

After Jesus left them, the disciples went to Jerusalem and gathered in an upstairs room, where they prayed together. Others were also there, including the mother of Jesus, His brothers, and other devotees, altogether about one hundred and twenty persons (1:15). Peter stood and announced that Judas Iscariot, the disciple who had led the soldiers to the garden where Jesus was to be taken prisoner had, with the money he had received for the betrayal, purchased a field and there had suddenly died from a fall. Since Judas had fallen away from grace, another was appointed to take his place, so that the number of apostles would remain twelve. A vote was taken, and Matthias was chosen.

On the day of Pentecost, the group was again by arrangement gathered together.

> **And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (2:2—4)**

As predicted by Jesus, when the disciples were fully receptive to it as a result of much prayer and supplication, they became infused with the influence of the Holy Spirit and began to manifest supernatural abilities. The ability referred to here is speaking in other languages. The disciples were not given to emotional utterances (glossolalia); rather, they were preaching to people whose origins were varied, in their own languages. They must have gone from the house where they were to a public place, because their hearers were amazed that this Galilaean group could speak in a language that they themselves could understand. Among the different nationalities were Parthians, Medes, Elamites, as well as natives of

Mesapotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Egypt, parts of Libya, Rome, and other places.

Not only were the people amazed, but some of them mocked and said (2:13), "These men are full of new wine." But Peter pointed out that it was only about nine o'clock in the morning (the third hour after dawn) and they had not been drinking wine. On the contrary, they were intoxicated with the ecstasy of God-experience.

The remainder of the Book of Acts gives information about the healings and life-transforming events that took place through the lives of the apostles as a result of their having been able to actualize the powers of the soul.

One important message to be gleaned from this account is that genuine spiritual work can only be done by one who is himself spiritually awakened. As Jesus had said earlier, one who is spiritually blind cannot lead another who is likewise spiritually blind. It is useful, of course, for us to teach others the laws of nature and the principles of appropriate thinking, feeling and behavior, but spiritual quickening can only be effected in the ministry of one who is himself spiritually awake. It is the transmission of the Spirit of God that performs the redeeming work.

Ask, and It Will Be Given Unto You

Matthew's Gospel, the first in the New Testament, opens with the story of the birth of Jesus, followed by the account of His baptism at the hands of John the Baptist and His being "led of the Spirit" to retire into the wilderness (4:1). Here, in seclusion, Jesus fasted for forty days and nights. It was during this time that He came fully to terms with His mission. It was a time of self-testing, during which inner impulses were neutralized so that the Christ of God could fully express. Jesus was later to say that He had "overcome the world," and He asked His disciples to do likewise. Having consciously experienced His true nature, He could ever after teach with the authority of one who knew the way to spiritual freedom. How familiar is this story, of awakening and preparation before going forth to share light with the world! Religious literature is replete with similar accounts, telling of how great prophets, those illumined of God, renounce everything and dedicate themselves to their calling. After this period of seclusion, Jesus was ready to do His Father's will.

In Galilee He began to teach (4:17), "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." To repent is to turn from that which is not useful to the higher way of life, and to commit oneself to a course of responsible action in order to experience the fulfillment of spiritual destiny. Jesus was saying, in effect, "Turn your attention to the *present* possibility of awakening from your spiritual slumber, that you might experience total

fulfillment right now. This fulfillment is available to you now if you will only recognize it and experience it."

We are told that Jesus, while walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw Simon called Peter and Andrew his brother, who were fishermen. Jesus said to them (4:19), "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." The brothers immediately left their nets and followed Jesus. Going on from there, He saw two more brothers, James and John. They were with their father, Zebedee, in a boat mending their nets. Jesus called to them and they left the ship and their father (4:22) and followed Jesus. Matthew does not record whether this was the first meeting between Jesus and these four men. That they followed Him immediately upon His inviting them to do so seems evidence that they knew Jesus, and had been waiting to be summoned. There is also a clear teaching message here: when the Christ of God, within us, summons us to awaken from the sleep of mortality, we should respond without hesitation.

Jesus then went about Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom (of heaven), and healing all manner of sickness and diseases (4:23).

Because of His ministry, with results following, His fame quickly spread, and many sick and diseased people were brought to Him, and *He healed them.* So great was the multitude which gathered that Jesus retreated with His disciples to a mountainous area, where He began to instruct the disciples. This portion of the Gospel is known as the Sermon on the Mount, and it opens with the Beatitudes:

> **Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (5:3)**

In this instruction, Jesus is not telling His disciples the way to spiritual freedom; He is describing the conditions and characteristics which manifest. *Happy* are those who acknowledge their spiritual poverty, for they can acknowledge a higher way and experience true and lasting fulfillment. A person who is proud in spirit, who is not aware of his own spiritually

impoverished condition, is not likely to even think of the possibility of awakening and needing change.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. (5:4)

One who is sorry for his shortcomings is ready to repent, to change, and to therefore experience the comforting awareness of the reality and presence of God.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. (5:5)

When assertiveness and deluded efforts are renounced, one can know what is the true will of God. Knowing this, and flowing with it, one finds himself supplied with all that is necessary for his comfort and for his worthy enterprises.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. (5:6)

Again, *happy* are they who realize the necessity of yearning for the understanding of the way of righteousness, the perfect order of the universe. As a result of such yearning, understanding unfolds and fulfillment can be experienced.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. (5:7)

Those who are compassionate, those who are free from thoughts and feelings of animosity, find that nature is friendly and supportive of them.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. (5:8)

Those who are free from inner conflicts, who live in harmony with natural laws, who are without divided loyalties or

interests, experience the natural flow of soul influence, resulting in God-realization. The inclination of the soul to express through the body and mind meets with resistance when purity is absent.

> **Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. (5:9)**

Those who strive to ensure harmony in the world are actually cooperating with the evolutionary urge in the direction of bringing about order in the world. They are recognized as being conscious participants in the Divine plan.

> **Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (5:10—12)**

We should not, of course, endeavor to experience conflict with others. But when others who are not yet spiritually awakened fail to understand us, we can be inwardly content, even in the face of such an attitude. During the Dark Age, when the majority of people on the planet are caught up in materialistic thinking, the public example of an enlightened person is seldom appreciated. The last Dark Age, in the 24,000-year grand cycle, began about 500 A.D. and ended about 1700 A.D. During the time of the ministry of Jesus, the world was approaching the Dark Age. Today, we are pulling away from Dark Age influences; remnants of that Age yet remain, but world consciousness is rapidly moving in the direction of an illumined humanity.

One might ask why, if Jesus was an embodiment of divine qualities and virtues, did He suffer opposition and even ridicule? He did not have to go against the tide of current political

and religious opinion; He could have lived quietly, attracting to Himself selected disciples who could have been taught in secret. He could have moved to another part of the world where He would have been more appreciated. Yet, because of His mission, He remained where He was, in the midst of controversy and danger. He chose to set an example to others and to attempt to cleanse human and planetary consciousness.

> **Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the foot of men. (5:13)**

Jesus tells His disciples that they are the precious ingredient in the world. He uses the example of salt, which was considered by many at the time to be a precious commodity. In some cultures, salt was even used as a form of payment, a medium of exchange, so valuable was it considered. In some circumstances in some parts of the world, workers would receive a portion of salt as payment for their labor. Hence the phrase, "He is not worth his salt," used in reference to the person who does not do enough work to justify his salt ration (his "salary"). If salt, as Jesus said, was devoid of saltiness, it was worthless. So the disciples, if they were lacking in that most necessary of essences, the Spirit of God, would not be worthy vessels through which the Christ of God's work could be made manifest.

> **Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (5:14—16)**

The disciples are admonished to allow the glory of God to shine resplendently through them that others might see it

and have their darkness banished. Jesus points out that people do not light a candle in the house and then cover it with a basket, denying those in the house the opportunity to experience the candle's light-conferring power. The disciples were instructed to share the light of God with others. After stressing the importance of righteousness (5:20), Jesus then gave more specific instruction to His disciples:

> **Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoeverof shall kill shall be in danger of the judgement: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. (5:21, 22)**

Here, Jesus captures the disciples' attention by mentioning that, according to Old Testament law, a person who commits murder would have to face the judgment of the Jewish civil court. He then goes on to say that if a person is angry with his brother (some manuscripts say "without just cause") he might also, according to law, be liable to face the court. The word "raca" is translated as "empty-headed." To insult a person could result in being taken to court to defend oneself in a lawsuit instigated by the offended party. When one becomes progressively more severe in his reproach of others and goes too far (calling another a fool, out of contempt for his character), then he might be in danger of personal injury, perhaps severe enough to result in his being killed and taken to the place outside of Jerusalem, in the valley of Hinnom, where rubbish, offal and carcasses were burned. This place of fire thus becomes a graphic metaphor for endless torment. Since it is impossible to know inner peace so long as inner conflict and outer differences remain, Jesus continues in his instruction to the disciples:

> **Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled with thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. (5:23, 24)**

It would be hypocritical of us to approach the hour of worship and meditation while still angry with another. If we are upset with another person, and if the problem can only be resolved by our going to that person and becoming reconciled with him, we should do so before offering anything to God. When going before God we should do so with a pure heart. If the problem is ours alone, and does not involve another person, we can then pray and engage in honest self-examination until the inner conflict is resolved. How can we honestly say that we rejoice in God's presence, or that we rejoice in an act of worship or charity, so long we we persist in allowing strong disagreements with others to persist? We cannot know peace of heart or serenity of mind until we have resolved conflicts and eliminated disharmony.

> **Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. (5:25, 26)**

What can happen, in a society where civil laws prevail, when we wrong another? We can be sued by the injured party and the court, if it determines that we are guilty, can sentence —a term of imprisonment or a fine, or both. Jesus is here giving practical advice relative to avoiding problems. He advises that one should come to an understanding with the person we have offended and, thereby, avoid future problems.

It is useful to always come to terms with conflict, whenever and however experienced, so as not to carry it along through life as a burden. When we handle what can be handled, in the moment, we free our time and energy for creative and purposeful actions in the future.

> **Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever look on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. (5:27, 28)**

To lust after something is to be driven by intense desire. To adulterate is to mix influences, to dilute them. In adultery between persons they mingle their energies and thoughts, with the result that both are weakened somewhat, and made less than they were before the relationship. Pure relationships, on the other hand, result in a strengthening of inner powers and forces.

In these verses, Jesus is referring to sexual desire. Men can lust after women and women can lust after men. To look at a person with lust in the heart is to encourage thoughts of a possible relationship. Thoughts can lead to actions and unwise actions can result in adultery as a physical act. But adultery is already committed to a degree when one harbors thoughts, feelings and fantasies about the possible physical union. Such thoughts, feelings and fantasies can result in inner confusion and emotional conflict; therefore, thoughts and feelings should be controlled through intentional discipline and purposeful creative action.

> **And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. (5:29,30)**

Jesus was here obviously overstating the point for the purpose of emphasis. He was certainly not recommending mutilation of the body for the purpose of actualizing spiritual capacities. In my imagination, I can see Him smiling, and even joking a little with His disciples as He talks about this matter of self-control. His disciples were men of the world—they were not ignorant of the facts of life, nor of the inclinations evident in human nature. It is a matter of historical record that centuries ago some religious sects actually practiced dismemberment, the removal of bodily parts, in the hope of negating acts which were considered to be contrary to higher values. There is a more direct and useful approach for all who aspire to the ideal mode of life. This way is the way of contemplative prayer and deep meditation.

When we meditate correctly, we withdraw attention from the sense receptors and reverse the flow of nerve force back to the brain centers. In this way we arrange conditions so that pure soul awareness can be experienced. In this way we learn to remain somewhat detached from externals, even while relating in a practical manner during daily involvements. By neutralizing the outflowing tendencies of the mind, a meditator learns to live a balanced life. Along with meditation, it is helpful to consciously exercise discipline of mind, emotions and behavior, in order to avoid temptations which could lead one away from the chosen path of action and behavior.

> **It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, save for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. (5: 31, 32)**

Jesus spoke of the Mosaic regulation regarding marriage and divorce. It was the custom at the time of Jesus, among the people to whom he ministered, that a man could divorce

his wife if he had just cause; in this case he had merely to write a certificate of divorce to justify his action. If a man divorced his wife for a trivial reason and without a written certificate, he would cause others in the community to think ill of his former wife—they would consider her an adulteress even if she were guiltless of the act. Unfaithfulness was considered to be a just reason for divorce. If a man divorced his wife without a written certificate of explanation, then even her new husband, should she remarry, would be considered an adulterer because of her presumed adulterous condition.

In the next few verses (33—37) the disciples are advised not to swear an oath, but merely to affirm or deny when questioned about a sensitive matter. Today, most civil courts will allow a person to affirm the truthfulness of his statements and will not demand that a sworn oath be taken. It is often assumed that under oath a person will not lie, but this is not always true. Therefore, it is better that one's character be recognized as being so unblemished that a simple affirmation of truthfulness will be sufficient.

> **Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. (5:38—42)**

The law of the land, in a land where laws are just, allows for judicial principle to mete out justice to fit a crime. Individuals in such societies should not take the law into their own hands. "Resist not evil" probably refers to persons who are malicious. Again, to use an example, Jesus suggested that one back off from a fight when possible. Self-defense, without undue injury to another, is justified. But to allow ourselves

to overreact is to be drawn into the same destructive mental and emotional state which characterizes the attacker.

A cloak was sometimes worn over the coat, or outer garment, and was usually more costly than the coat. It was sometimes used as a bed garment, and sometimes a man's cloak was given as security for a debt which could not be paid for a day or two. In this instance, if one obtained lodging, for example, but did not pay for it, and was sued by the owner of the lodging house, there should be no argument. A debt was due and one should pay it, plus extra for the inconvenience.

In those times postal couriers had the authority to press persons into service whenever needed. Therefore, if one were compelled to assist the courier over a short distance, one should do even more than asked and, in this way, demonstrate a helpful attitude. Giving freely to those who ask, and lending to responsible persons, if one has the means, is indicative of our true caring for our fellow man. There is no suggestion here that one is to give unwisely or lend money or things to persons who are not honest and responsible.

> **Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? (5:43—47)**

It is easy to love our friends. It is not always so easy to love, to really care about the welfare of another, if that person has decided to be our enemy and to injure us in some way.

The ideal is to rescue the misguided person, if possible, from his present confused state. We do not have to remain in personal communication with people with whom it is impossible to relate. We can, however, when they come to mind, bless them and wish them well, and then move on to our own duties with a clear mind. This is better for our spiritual and psychological health than to harbor anger, resentment, fear, or any thoughts of revenge. Such negative emotional and mental states injure us, often far more than anything another person can do to us.

We do not always know the inner condition of another, and what drives people to do what they do. The sun shines upon all people and the benevolence of nature is available to all people. Should not our good will be just as impartial?

The publicans were the Jewish tax collectors who often extorted unfair tax payments for the Romans. They were despised by the general populace. Jesus was saying that even these despised men were kind and appropriate to their own friends, even though they were not kind to those from whom they extorted unfair taxes. Jesus pointed out that if the disciples honored only those who were their friends, while harboring ill will toward others who were not their friends, they were not any better than the publicans.

> **Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect. (5:48)**

Remember that, during this interlude of instruction, Jesus was talking with His disciples, whom He had invited to withdraw with Him to an elevated place, somewhat removed from the multitudes which had gathered. There He instructed them about practical matters, both for their own good and because He expected them to later teach others. He also emphasized subtle matters of a spiritual nature, because a true master is concerned with the health and well-being of society, and the spiritual enlightenment of mankind.

His final statement in this chapter is direct: "Be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." There is no possi-

bility of perfection so long as one is still identified with mental and emotional conditionings, and so long as one is functioning from ego-consciousness. The only way to express perfection is to express from the soul nature, which is an exact reflection of the Godhead. The Godhead is not contaminated by the manifold variations interacting in the relative spheres. The soul need not be influenced by psychological conditionings or outer circumstances. The key is to be Self-realized, to be established in the awareness of Being. This, then, was Jesus' request of His disciples—that they be established in the awareness of the Self, the soul.

The observance of outer rules and regulations is conducive to interpersonal harmony, social order, and total environmental cooperation. In this manner, conflicts are minimal and chaos is impossible. There can be no personal exploitation and, certainly, no wars, when men live a decent life. Crime becomes nonexistent, the welfare of the human community is encouraged, and those who are in need are nourished until they, too, can become self-sufficient and doers of the good and the possible.

Chapter Six continues the instruction given by Jesus to His disciples. He continues to give examples, to clarify His meaning and to make the message more real to them. This chapter also includes *The Lord's Prayer*, so potent with divine intention, and so universal and well-serving.

> **Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine**

alms may be in secret: and the Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly. (6:1—4)

In some early texts the word *righteousness* is used instead of "alms" in the first verse. In other words, *let* your light shine (5:16) but do not make a public show of it. Be righteous but do not dramatize your righteousness. *Alms* refers to charitable giving. We should not publicize our giving, because it is our moral duty to give a portion of our substance for the welfare of others and the planet. There may be occasions when planned publicity is useful, relative to charitable giving, to encourage others to also become involved, but the giver should not be in need of being recognized or praised for his giving. Why should we allow ego needs to be involved and confused with what is our plain spiritual and moral duty? This would be a contradiction and would be useful neither to the person giving nor to others who might be in need of an example to emulate. Hypocrites (from the Greek word for actors playing a part) have their reward the very moment they are applauded for their act of giving. They receive their payment (personal satisfaction) at that very moment.

I do not know whether or not during the time of Jesus' ministry, in the area where He lived, sanitary regulations regarding the use of the hands were the same as in some other parts of the East. If so, the reference to not letting the left hand know what the right hand is doing would be appropriate. In India, for instance, in rural areas today (and the custom prevails even in cities), one uses the right hand for eating and for social acts. The left hand is "unclean," because it is the toilet hand, the one used in cleansing the private parts of the body. Thus, for the orthodox person, it is inappropriate to give or receive anything by using the left hand. And the right hand is always used when eating food.

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou

> **prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him. (6:5—8)**

Again, a hypocrite is one who is acting out a drama for the benefit of others. A religious person who is hypocritical will sometimes outwardly dramatize his devotion to God by calling public attention to his act of worship. During the time of Jesus it was common for a religious person to pray at prescribed times, and to go to a house of worship for this purpose. Sometimes, if the person was not able to go to the place of worship at the appointed time, or had forgotten to do so, he would pray in the street, or wherever he might be. Jesus did not condemn public prayer, because He often prayed in public when it was appropriate. He was here saying that one's prayers should be appropriate and the best way to pray, most of the time, is in private.

Heathens, in Biblical language, were those who did not understand the nature of the One God, who were unenlightened about the matter, and often superstitious. If they prayed, they would often beseech God with repeated phrases, as though to finally force Him to respond to their prayers—but without result, because they were not praying correctly. Their prayers were, then, in vain.

Since God is all in all, our needs are already known to the Larger Life of us. We do not have to bring our needs to the attention of the Larger Life. If we are lacking anything, all we have to do is to open mind and consciousness to the fact that what we need is already available, and then appropriate it. This is the prayer, not of request or petition, but of recognition. It is this kind of prayer that Jesus recommended that His disciples understand and apply. Jesus often prayed before

a need was met; He prayed a prayer of thanksgiving, even before outer events confirmed His inner recognition.

This process is the natural form of prayer for one who is consciously established in the inner awareness of the true, the spiritual nature. When we are thus established we clearly know that because we are waves on the Ocean of Life, all that is contained in the Ocean is also contained within us, and that all that is contained in the Ocean is available to us relative to our outer expression.

> **After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. (6:9, 10)**

The first three petitions have to do with the way of righteousness, the Divine plan for earth and for mankind. That which is regarded as hallowed is looked upon as holy, to be reverenced. The soul is a portion of God, but God is the Larger Reality. Man, while in relative consciousness, does not know his true nature, except as a concept. Therefore, one does well to contemplate the Infinite Life with reverence and an attitude of surrender.

The kingdom of heaven is the condition of fulfillment and harmony, even while we are embodied. Let us expect, and work for with faith, fulfillment and harmony for ourselves and for our world. In heaven, in the celestial realms, order already exists. When the Divine influence is fully operative in the physical realm, then it is on earth as it is (already) in the celestial realms.

During our present time cycle, we are witnessing a powerful infusion of Divine force into planetary consciousness. This is why mankind is so rapidly awakening, becoming more conscious and responsible. Another factor is that when we as individuals are open to the activity of God through us, we become conduits through which the Divine impulses can flow, not only into our immediate environment, but also into world consciousness.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. (6:11—13)

When we are open to the flow of good, we automatically experience support and nourishment for the body and for all worthy projects and activities. While praying in this manner, one should be open to the realization that personal needs are supplied from the infinite storehouse, which is always pushing itself in the direction of manifestation.

When we make mistakes we are in debt to Life. Life releases us from our debts, caused by mistakes, when we understand our follies and change our ways to conform with nature's laws. It would be hypocritical of us to expect forgiveness and release while still judging others and failing to forgive them.

God does not tempt us, but when we are not God-centered we can be led astray and do unwise things. This portion of the prayer is really a self-reminding petition to keep us steady and purposeful on the spiritual path. Evil is error, that which is the opposite of good, or righteousness. Let us deliver ourselves from improper thoughts, feelings and behavior—by keeping our attention centered on God and by living the ideal life to the best of our ability. To live the ideal life demands that we learn to discern what is useful to our high purposes, in contrast to that which is not useful.

God is the only Reality. Therefore, everything is God expressing, and this will never change.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive men not their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (6:14, 15)

It is not that God refuses to allow us release from our debts to Life, incurred due to errors of perception and judg-

ment; it is that so long as we continue to condemn others we are still in error and unable to know the peace and inner fulfillment which we are really worthy of. Forgiveness of others enables us to cleanse the mind and heart of animosity; the full force of the soul can then permeate mind and body.

> **Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. (6:16—18)**

Our relationship with God is strictly personal. We should not outwardly dramatize to others that we are engaged in spiritual practices. To publicly dramatize our spiritual practices is to make a mockery of them. One is advised to be appropriate at all times, while steadfastly and quietly cultivating the inner life. Fasting from food, from negative thoughts and from destructive feelings has value, because such fasting purifies the body, mind and emotional nature. Those who dramatize their spiritual practices experience instant "reward" in that they attract attention to themselves, thus satisfying their petty ego needs. This is evidence of shallow thinking, as well as of a poor self-image which needs the attention of others to bolster it. The real "reward" of correct fasting is a more intimate awareness of the presence of God as a moment-to-moment experience.

> **Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (6:19—21)**

A common error among religious leaders of the time (and still prevalent today) was the undue emphasis placed upon material wealth being evidence of God's approval. Elsewhere in the New Testament, Jesus praises the prudent use of money and resources, so obviously He is not here condemning a practical relationship with material things. What He is suggesting is that one should not be possessed by possessions to the point of hoarding material things or being envious of the possessions of others. Rather, one should emphasize dedication to spiritual practices and right living in order to experience permanent Divine consciousness.

We can easily tell what we really consider most important to us by honestly examining our thoughts, feelings and actions. If we are habitually thinking, feeling and performing actions which relate to material survival, comfort and acquisition of possessions, instead of cultivating those thoughts, feelings and actions which lead to increased soul awareness, we are obviously more materialistically than spiritually motivated. What we value most is our treasure; it is there that most of our attention is centered.

> **The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee is darkness, how great is that darkness! (6: 22, 23)**

We observe our world because light flows into the brain through the eyes. When we see clearly, when we live with purpose, we are single-pointed; we are therefore filled with the Light of Divinity. When we experience errors in perception, when we choose to see imperfection, we are confused and experience inner conflict; we are then in darkness. If the mind is darkened, due to our seeing imperfectly, how great is the unknowingness and confusion!

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (6:24)

Here is a graphic illustration, to make the point. A servant cannot really work for two different people to whom his total allegiance is owed. One would have to make a choice as to which employer he would completely serve. Mammon refers to wealth: one cannot be completely absorbed in and attached to matters of the world and still give attention to spiritual matters. Note that Jesus is not here finding fault with wealth, but enslavement to it.

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? (6:25, 26)

The above verses deal with anxiety over necessities and "things." Surely, Jesus was not against planning and personal foresight. The opening sentence can be more clearly understood as "take no *anxious* thought, etc." There is more to living than just feeding the body, and the body is meant for more than adornment.

In referring to birds, Jesus was pointing out that since they did only what was natural to them, nature provided for their food and comfort, just as when we do what is correct and natural to us, we will have no problems in seeing to our needs.

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet

I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? (6:27—30)

Can anyone, by thinking and visualizing, add eighteen inches (a cubit) to his height? Yet a child will grow into adulthood naturally when nourished properly. Taking (undue) thought for clothing and body adornment is to consider the body more important than the cultivation of soul qualities. As an example, Jesus pointed to the flowers of the field, and the naturalness of the process of blooming. Flowers, too, fade away. Man is higher on the scale of life and should therefore be able to experience right action and fulfillment more easily than other aspects of nature.

Jesus was talking with His disciples in relative privacy, with the multitude nearby. Some of the disciples must have expressed to Him some anxiety about the welfare of the body, for Jesus to have gone into this matter so fully. He also knew that His disciples were later to travel and minister and that it would be well for them to be reminded that their needs would be met without difficulty as long as they remained true to their calling.

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. (6:31—34)

Again, there is an admonition to take no anxious thought

about survival needs. Gentiles were those outside of the faith, who did not know (it is presumed) about the reality of God. Such people are inclined to overly emphasize material matters. When we are in our right place in life, doing what we are meant to do, we have no problems. The Infinite Life, of which we are units, "knows" everything, even that we have personal needs. It will also supply those needs, on time and in abundance, when we are open to the flow.

Then, the key: seek knowledge (and experience of) God first, and all outer matters will be taken care of. We will naturally do what we have to do, we will be open to our good, and the belief in separation between the spiritual and the material will vanish! We will know, for certain, that there is but One Power, One Presence, One Being, and One Substance in, through, and as this world.

Chapter Six closes with instruction to the disciples not to worry about the things which are to be the next day, and in the days to come. Do not, the instruction is, add the weight of tomorrow's burden to today's challenges. Live the very best and highest you can today, and handle tomorrow's problems tomorrow, if and when they are presented. The lesson is that when we handle today's business well, we are more able to handle future business of any kind.

Chapter Seven contains the final instruction shared by Jesus with His disciples on this particular occasion:

> **Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. (7:1, 2)**

An act of judgment is neutral until a determination has been arrived at. What is here discussed is the habit of judging others in a critical manner, not knowing the true inner motives of the one so judged. When we indulge in critical judgment of others we are allowing ourselves to be separate, self-

centered and narrow-minded. Life then "judges" us to be unworthy of the flow of grace. It is not that grace is not always available to us, but that our closed consciousness, our lack of receptivity to grace, keeps it from flowing through us. Also, how we treat others is how we will be treated by those with whom we associate.

> **And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. (7:3—5)**

The illustration is intentionally exaggerated to show the ludicrous position of a person who sets himself up as a judge of another's personal behavior, before clearing his own mind and heart of faults. A mote is a speck of sawdust, and a beam is, of course, a plank used to support a building. The suggestion is that is it foolish for one to look at the faults of others while having even larger faults of one's own. We should, then, see to our own moral and spiritual health, rather than attempting to force others to change to suit us.

> **Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. (7:6)**

Again, an exaggerated comparison. Jesus was not referring to people who are unreceptive to Truth teachings as dogs and pigs in the literal sense. Truth teachings are precious, and to be examined and understood, not to be taken lightly or to be allowed to be the butt of sneering and cynical comments by others. Some people who are self-centered and destructive will even harass and revile those who are trying to live the ideal

life. Rather than become the target of such abuse, it is better for one to remain silent and to cultivate the interior life.

> **Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. (7:7—8)**

Here Jesus is referring to turning to prayer in order to awaken to a conscious awareness of the goodness of life. If one will ask in the right way, one will receive; if one seeks without fainting, one will discover the answers to questions; if one continues to yearn and to press onward, the full knowledge of God and the universe will unfold.

> **Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him? Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets. (7:9—12)**

A round rock may bear a resemblance to a loaf of bread, but a parent would not tease a hungry child by offering him a rock instead of food. No kind parent would offer a snake for food if a hungry child asked for fish. The word evil here refers to the human condition of being liable to make errors in judgment; therefore, one who is still not perfect in consciousness, but who lovingly treats his children well, should understand that Life, which is benevolent, has the urge to provide only that which is good and useful to people who ask and who are open.

Then, there is the lesson in behavior, the admonition to treat others kindly and with due respect. This is not only use-

ful for social harmony; it is also useful in clearing the mind and consciousness so that the soul nature can be more operant. Also, our state of consciousness is reflected in our experiences and relationships in our world. To cultivate the virtues is to learn to live the ideal human life, which usually precedes spiritual awakening.

> **Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. (7:13, 14)**

The path upon which we embark is the gate which leads to the way, to the procedures and transformation experiences. The process of unfoldment is that of one from simple consciousness, to self-consciousness, to soul-consciousness, to cosmic consciousness, and to transcendence. This is the direct way which leads to ultimate liberation. Those who are without clear purpose, who drift through life, often being sidetracked, wander the broad path which has no specific destination.

> **Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree being forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. (7:15—20)**

Sheep's clothing refers to the non-threatening appearance which may conceal the inner nature of one falsely posing as a religious leader or spiritual teacher. One on the path should

learn to discern honest and enlightened teachers, in contrast to those who are dishonest (either intentionally or because of their own weaknesses) and who are not yet possessed of the necessary clear understanding to be valid teachers. A virtuous person will not injure others or take advantage of them; a person who is not possessed of the virtues cannot help but cause pain and problems to himself and others. Pseudo-spiritual teachers should be avoided, so that their teaching and behavior cannot contaminate our consciousness.

How can we tell if a person who is playing the role of a spiritual teacher is honest and a true teacher? We can observe, we can question, we can compare his teachings with those teachings of the saints and masters of whom we have knowledge. Truth teachings have not changed over the centuries—how can they, if they are true? That which was the truth five thousand years ago is true today. Read the teachings of the *siddhas* of Vedic tradition, read the teachings of the Buddha, read the words of Jesus, listen to contemporary enlightened persons, and you will perceive the light of Truth which underlies all authentic enlightenment traditions.

> **Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity. (7:21—23)**

Not everyone who talks about God is actually doing God's will as a result of knowing the reality of God as a personal and intimate experience. Many who are religious can perform minor miracles and attribute them to Divine influence, but such persons may still be lacking in God-realization. The ability

to control the elements and to command the forces of mind and nature is not proof of enlightenment. It is not so much what we can do for God; it is what we can *allow* God to do *through* us that is the important thing.

Jesus was not condemning acts of healing, or the other gifts of the Spirit. He was explaining the difference between outer behavior and an inner state of grace. He, Himself, performed many miracles, some out of compassion and some to demonstrate to the people His Divine nature. You will recall from our study of *The Gospel According to Saint John* that the multitudes were initially attracted to Jesus because of His miracles, and only later because of His teaching. Even the events described which lead up to this present episode (chapters Five, Six and Seven of Matthew's Gospel) were replete with miracles, the demonstration of miraculous powers being one reason the multitudes were following Jesus.

> **Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. (7:24—27)**

Here is the call to action. One is not merely to hear the words; one is to put the teaching into practice. One who lives the ideal life will survive any storm in life. One who does not live the life is likely to be buffeted and defeated by events and circumstances.

> **And it came to pass; When Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doc-**

trine: For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. (7:28, 29)

The people who heard this message were impressed because of the clarity, reasonableness and truthfulness of Jesus' words. He did not teach as did the scribes who, to support their words, laced their lectures with the theories of respected rabbis and with traditional views about the Scriptures. What Jesus said was real, because He was real, and spoke from direct knowledge.

Chapter Eight opens with Jesus coming down from the mountain, with the multitudes following Him. A man with leprosy approached Him with reverence and requested healing. Jesus immediately healed the man of his affliction. Later, at Capernaum, a centurion approached Jesus and requested healing for his servant, who was at the man's house. Jesus did not go to the house. He merely said, "Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." Matthew reports that the servant was healed during that very hour. When Jesus arrived at the house where Peter lived, Peter's mother-in-law was "sick of a fever." Jesus touched her hand and the fever left her. That evening many sick people were brought to Him and He healed them.

Departing with His disciples, Jesus entered a ship in order to sail to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. He slept, and while He slept, "there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves." His disciples awakened Him, expressing their fear. Jesus said, "Why are you so fearful, O ye of little faith?" Then He "arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm." (8:23–26)

A God-conscious master can do all of the things Jesus did. For one who is conscious of his omnipresent nature, it is an easy thing to control various aspects of nature. Only those who are not God-conscious marvel at such acts, and many who thus marvel would not be willing to undergo the inner

purification necessary if they would exercise their own soul abilities.

In Chapter Nine we find Jesus healing a man of palsy, a paralytic condition. Later, when Jesus was partaking of a meal in a house, many publicans and common people with problems came to be near Him and His disciples. A Pharisee saw this and asked of the disciples, "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" Jesus heard the question, and said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Jesus continued to teach, expressing His new message:

> **No man putteth a new piece of cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles; else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles and both are preserved. (9:16, 17)**

Those who debated with Jesus were rigid in their thinking, and clinging to traditional views of right and wrong. Jesus was calling for a fresh look at life, rather than a patchwork approach. For instance, to put a new piece of cloth on a worn garment might pose a problem when the garment was washed. The new cloth used as a patch might, if not treated or prepared, shrink and cause a rent in the fabric. Bottles made of skin, if used and therefore dried up and shrunken, might break because of lost elasticity, when the new wine began to ferment. In a like manner, when we attempt to fit new concepts into a mind-set containing rigid ideas, the result is often confusion.

Jesus was then called to the house where the daughter of a local ruler lay in a deathlike condition, and He awakened her. Later He traveled through the cities and villages, teaching and preaching the gospel, as well as healing people who were sick. Seeing the confusion of the people, and their lack of direction in life, Jesus said to His disciples:

The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few: Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest. (9:37, 38)

Being moved with compassion, Jesus could see a potential spiritual harvest ready to be gathered in; He could also see that the process would require the work of many God-led workers. He asked the disciples to pray about this, and, as is often the case, many who were asked to pray about the matter became involved in the ministry, to show souls the way to freedom in God.

A similar situation prevails in our present time. Millions of men and women are confused; many are looking for direction in their lives. Of course, useful help is at hand for many of these people, but either they cannot see it or, if they come into contact with it, they find themselves unable or unwilling to follow through and do what must be done to experience growth and change. The world can use thousands of dedicated, God-conscious men and women to take the word to others. Unfortunately, it often seems that many would-be teachers are zealous, and often mean well, but are simplistic in their approach. Others, who may have a more complete understanding, are not always impelled to reach out to serve others. This is the condition of human consciousness during our present time-phase.

Chapter Ten includes instruction given by Jesus to His disciples relative to how to minister, to travel and to share the gospel. Afterwards (chapter Eleven) Jesus continued to visit various cities, teaching those who were drawn to Him. Chapter Twelve gives further details about what occurred during this phase of traveling and teaching. Then, in the opening verses of Chapter Thirteen, we learn how Jesus sat by the seaside, where a large number of people had gathered about Him. He boarded a boat just off shore, and began to speak to the people.

> **Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up, and choked them. But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. (13: 3—9)**

Jesus sometimes taught in parables, concrete, plausible narratives, to make His teaching easy to recall, as well as to leave it to the listener to draw his own conclusion as to the meaning of the parable. Sometimes He would explain the meaning and, at other times, He would leave it to the listeners to ponder the message. The disciples approached Jesus and asked Him (13:10) why He thus spoke in parables to the people assembled. He answered:

> **Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. (13:11—13)**

The disciples Jesus had chosen were sufficiently intuitive and discerning to be most receptive to His inner teaching. The general population, while curious, could not at the time understand the total Truth that Jesus was capable of sharing. Those

who have knowledge can acquire more; those who have a little knowledge but who do not pursue greater understanding find that even the little knowledge they have is diminished.

In the parable of the Sower, Jesus compared teaching to the sowing of seeds. Some constructive ideas and teachings fall by the wayside, finding no place to take root. Other teachings fall upon unprepared and infertile minds; in this case, whatever small growth results does not long remain, because the recipient is not prepared to use what is learned or to practice what is taught. Some teachings fall into minds filled with conflict and are choked out before they can flourish. But when words of Truth are reverently received by one whose mind is purified and whose heart is devoted, the seeds of Truth can take firm root and grow to maturity.

After a reference to the Old Testament prophet Esaias, Jesus continued:

> **For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull to hearing, and their eyes they have closed: lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things ye hear, and have not heard them. (13:15—17)**

Referring to the condition of the average person (this people's), Jesus explained to His disciples that when people refuse (or are not able to) hear words of Truth, and when they close their eyes to the obvious, it is sometimes due to the fact that they are fearful of being self-honest and of having to undergo necessary changes. Many want some understanding, but not total understanding; they want enough understanding

to improve their human condition, but they do not yet desire illumination of consciousness. Jesus then explained that many prophets (those with far-reaching vision) and righteous men desired to understand what the disciples were capable of understanding, but that they were unable to do so because they were not yet sufficiently spiritually awakened.

On the spiritual path, the ideal disciple is one who can not only comprehend the inner teachings but who is also dedicated to the fulfillment of his spiritual destiny. There are many on the path who consider themselves to be disciples but who still are lacking, for the time being, in powers of discernment. If they are intent, however, they can take on faith the words of the guru, and what is taught in scripture, thus preparing themselves for eventual soul awakening.

The Cause and Nature of the Manifest Worlds

In the preceding chapters, we have examined *The Gospel According to Saint John* and portions of *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, as well as *The Acts of the Apostles.* In doing so, we have learned many things about the Christ of God, manifesting in and through Jesus. We have been informed of the major teachings in His ministry, and of the way to soul freedom. By understanding what has been shared you have been given the keys to interpreting all of the Gospel accounts. Please remember, while historical data may be of interest, of greater importance are the inner awakening we can experience and the vital activity of the Holy Spirit within us which can transform and redeem.

Now we will turn to the opening verses of the Book of *Genesis*, the first book of the Old Testament, because it is here that we will learn of the creation of the world and the purpose of life in this realm. When this is understood, there is certainly no room for argument between proponents of the theory of creation and those who prefer to accept the theory of evolution. *Something* caused the worlds to form, and the process of world manifestation, from subtle to gross, can be examined and understood. The more we examine the nature of the material world, the more we must stand in awe, as we begin to faintly comprehend the divine simplicity of it all.

So now let us turn to *The First Book of Moses, Called Genesis.*

Genesis is a Greek word meaning "origin." God has no origin, no beginning, but the manifest realms did have a genesis. As we examine this Book we will learn of our own divine destiny, and of our place in the grand scheme of Life. The formation of the worlds is of interest; of even greater interest to us is our own journey through space and time. We have come from inner space, and we will one day return to inner space.

> **In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light. (1:1—3)**

Before the manifestation of the worlds, God existed in Self-completeness. When the urge to manifest occurs, the forces of the Godhead begin to stir and creative energy unfolds from the Godhead to begin the process of creation.

The subtle seed-influences which are found throughout all of nature also reside in the Godhead. These influences unfold and express as nature. In the Godhead Itself there are two aspects, the positive and the negative. When these two polarities are in balance, along with the subtle electric influences existing in the Godhead, the worlds are not manifested and the Godhead remains Self-absorbed. When the subtle electric influences are not in a condition of balance, the worlds are sent forth into manifestation.

The three subtle electric influences are: 1) the elevating, redeeming, and enlightening influence; 2) the influence which makes possible activity and motion; and 3) the influence which moves in the direction of heaviness, gravity, and darkness. In Sanskrit, these influences are referred to as the *gunas* (rope or net), because they bind and regulate other forces in nature. When the darkening influence is the strongest of the three, the worlds are formed. When the worlds are in form, and the redeeming (enlightening) influence becomes influen-

tial, life-forms appear and creation begins to be drawn back into the Godhead. The process of world manifestation and the process of world transformation require many billions of years of transitional phases. Therefore, the "days" referred to in this first chapter refer symbolically to time periods of great duration, in which the various stages of world manifestation occur.

Genesis is believed to have been written by Moses, who, you will remember, was trained in Egypt while still a youth, and who is believed to have had access to ancient books, records and oral accounts. People of all cultures have their creation stories; because of my philosophical roots in scriptures supporting the practice of Yoga, I will, from time to time, draw attention to the common threads which run through both the *Genesis* account and the revealed teachings of the seers of Vedic times.

All of creation, so Vedic seers declare, is a play of forces, a drama, a cosmic dance. The process is made possible because of the interaction of Spirit and the forces of Spirit, which are collectively referred to as Nature. God is often referred to as Father, the positive polarity, the masculine principle; Nature is often referred to as Mother, the negative polarity, the feminine principle. It is actually One Thing with two aspects.

In Vedic scriptures the basic "stuff" of which the worlds are formed is sometimes referred to as "the darkness," because it is strongly affected by the darkening or veiling aspect of the influence of nature. Because of the darkening or veiling influence, souls which become involved with creation forget, to a degree, their true identity, and thus no longer consciously know the truth about themselves.

When the Spirit of God actively influences primeval nature, then light (Life) is infused into subtle and gross matter. Even before this active infusion of Spirit occurs, however, there is intelligence existing in the stuff of which forms are later made.

The basic fabric of nature can be understood when one knows that four components underlie it. These aspects are: creative energy, particles, space, and time. Today's scientists are dedicated to discovering and understanding this unified

field, and many are correct in their opinion that a single common force is responsible for all outer phenomena.

Duality and relativity make possible and are characteristic of the manifest realms. The average person, while relating to nature, remains caught up in duality and relative occurrences and seldom experiences even a brief moment of the transcendent awareness which would enable him to observe from an overview of correct perception. One who has not experienced, or conceived of, the transcendent aspect of consciousness finds it almost impossible to accept its existence. Yet mystics down through the ages and modern science alike affirm that there is indeed a field out of which all forms emerge, and into which they dissolve.

> **And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day. And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called He Seas: and God saw that it was good. (1:4—10)**

The universe is not merely the physical realm we perceive through the senses. Behind what we perceive with the physical senses are more subtle realms which were produced before the physical realms were produced. The first realm, nearest to the Godhead, is known as the true heaven, the realm of the gods, divine beings, or almost pure souls as specialized ex-

pressions of the Godhead. Then there are the causal realms, composed of aura-electricities. Next are the astral realms and, finally, the gross realm, the physical universe. The entire production is one of God's consciousness and energy, yet there are divisions and spheres, marked off by lines of magnetic force. According to an ancient Vedic scripture, the worlds (and life-forms) are made possible because of twenty-five divisions of consciousness, from the Godhead to full material manifestation. These will be defined a little later on, when we examine the matter of how man appeared in the relative spheres.

> **And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day. (1:11—13)**

After the worlds were formed, the life-force began to be unveiled, resulting in the manifestation of vegetation. The question comes, "How did life emerge and cause living forms to manifest if the planet was barren?" It is now believed by scientists that when a planet is ready to support life forms, then the basic building blocks of nature, already existing in chemical form, come together to begin the process. As students of spiritual science, we can also understand how the pattern for earth forms exists in subtle realms before emerging into physical form.

Since the whole panorama is an outpicturing from the Mind of God, even the ideas (pictures or patterns) were issued from the moment of beginning.

> **And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for**

> **days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day. (1:14—19)**

During this time-phase the planets, with their moons, settled into an orderly relationship in our solar system, and in relationship to other heavenly bodies in our galaxy. The sun rules the day, and the moon rules the night by reflecting the light of the sun. Now it was possible for time to be computed, using the heavenly bodies as reference points. The gravitational pull of the moon also regulates the ocean tides and the fluids of the planet. This includes an influence upon all living organisms, because of the fluids their bodies contain.

> **And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day. (1:20—23)**

Notice the natural sequence of life appearing on the planet. Vegetation preceded marine life and birds so that food would be provided for them when they evolved. Again, this "day" was millions of years in duration.

> **And God said, let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. (1:24, 25)**

The next phase saw the emergence upon the planet of animal life of every description. When natural conditions are not disturbed, all organic life lives in a reasonable balance; food chains are established, and often survival results in mutual support systems being established. More often than not, predators prey on available convenient food sources in ways which to us may seem cruel; yet this is simply the way of nature at that particular level.

Notice how often the author of this text uses the phrase, "And God saw that it was good." Now, of course, God is not a person, who "saw" that His creation was "good," but the author, Moses, himself seeing the divine order of the unfolding drama of creation, pronounced it good as he felt God might view it.

> **And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (1:26—28)**

When the planet was ready for man, man took his place

in the scheme of nature. God is not a cosmic human being, but man is a reflection, a "likeness" of God, in that in man are found all of the spiritual qualities and capacities of God. In an ancient Hindu scripture (the *Srimad Bhagavata*), the first man and woman in physical form are referred to as "man born of the Creator" and his "true image." In *Genesis* (2:21, 22) we read that God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, whom He had made from the "dust of the ground." God then took one of Adam's ribs, and made Eve to be Adam's female companion. The entire story of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden is obviously an allegory—a simplistic story told in order to make some sort of point of spiritual significance to the hearer or reader possessed of understanding.

To be human is to be a blend of divine qualities and thinking principle, or mind. There are in various cultures many different stories concerning the original appearance of mankind on the planet. One version is that when certain life forms became sufficiently refined to be able to host a truly conscious soul, such souls were then born into that particular group of life forms. These souls came in from the astral realms, after having come through the causal realm from the celestial realms, to take on a physical body. Another version is that once this process began, the gods took physical form to mate with early man, in order to accelerate the process of human evolution. For instance, we read in the sixth chapter of the book of *Genesis:*

> And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he is also flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of

> men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. (6:1—4)

Who were these gods, these "sons of God", who took human wives and begat strong children? It may have been nothing supernatural at all; it may be that another group of people, following their own evolutionary path, came into the territory and mixed with the race under discussion. This has been a frequent occurrence throughout history, and is more likely than the *Genesis* story.

Man is a superior being on the planet because of his higher consciousness, and his more refined and highly developed brain and nervous structure. Obviously, not all people demonstrate their divine qualities to the same degree; but all people have the capacity, and the destiny, to eventually do so.

The Spirit of God is not permanently embodied, "for that he is flesh," but, at this time, the trend was for one hundred and twenty years to be the average span of human life. Many Old Testament characters, it is recorded, lived much longer—some for hundreds of years.

To return to the first chapter of *Genesis:*

> And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw every thing that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. (1:29—31)

A careful examination of the tooth structure of man, as well as an examination of the length of his intestinal tract, makes it fairly obvious that man was designed to consume

grains, vegetables and fruits as nourishment. In the verses just quoted above, the word "meat" refers to food. Human beings, then, can derive adequate nourishment from a natural non-meat diet; this is the experience of millions of people in today's world.

The events depicted as the "fall of man" story in *Genesis* are obviously simple symbolic illustrations. Intelligent students are not really to believe that Eve conversed with a snake, and that God tested Adam and Eve by planting a tree in the garden which yielded fruit which was forbidden to them. There is, actually, a deep and important significance in this story.

When human beings are resting in divine consciousness, even while embodied, they enjoy conscious communion with God. They then literally experience harmony and fulfillment. When human beings forget God and allow their attention and energy to flow outward into the sense world too strongly, to the point of becoming attached to externals and dependent upon them, they then lose the awareness of their divine nature.

For centuries, many religious teachings have suggested that the forbidden fruit of the Adam and Eve story is a symbol for sexual intercourse. This is a convenient way to control people who are religiously devout because, having natural sexual urges and perhaps experiences, they identify with Adam and Eve and share their guilty "sin."

Fundamentalist Christian doctrine is for naive people who cannot comprehend the truth veiled by the words in scripture. "Since we are like Adam," so the teaching goes, "we are all sinners. But there is a way out—the way is to believe that Jesus died for our sins. All will then be made well." The true meaning of Scripture is far deeper than this.

The major problem that has always confronted and is still to this day confronting humanity is that of our failure to live in harmony with natural law. This "disobedience" results in mental conflict, emotional confusion, and the various other troubles which are likely to follow when we fail to obey the natural laws. If we continue to "sin," to miss the mark in life, if we continue to fail to live in harmony with natural laws,

we will suffer—because of our own errors. If, on the other hand, we consciously recognize and realize our divine nature (the Christ of God), we will then be restored to a normal life, that of spiritual fulfillment and communion with God. So, far more than belief is required. What is required is the conscious realization of our divine nature.

The Stages of World Manifestation

Samkhya Theory is one of the six major philosophical systems of India. The word *samkhya* means the enumeration, or numbering, of the stages and aspects of Supreme Consciousness, from the Absolute, Transcendental Field to the full manifestation of nature. This teaching asserts that the knowledge of an object is possible only when knowledge of its components is experienced. Twenty-five categories are taught as the basis of creation and the cosmic evolutionary process. A brief explanation follows.

1. *The Unmanifest Field* —The Absolute, Transcendental Reality which is beyond all outer manifestations. This is the source of all manifestation and the realm of all knowledge. The potential for creativity, and knowledge of it, can never cease, because the Unmanifest Field is stable, permanent, and without beginning or end. It is unbounded Pure Existence.

2. *Initial Manifest Substance-Consciousness* —The field of the Godhead, the cosmic Self of every soul. Here are found the electric attributes or influences which make possible all outer manifestation. Here, too, is Spirit involved with nature.

3. *Movement in the Direction of Manifestation* —When the electric attributes in the Godhead become agitated and mixed, creative force flows from the Godhead to begin the production of the worlds. World manifestation is not "bad" or undesirable; it is simply the way of Life.

4. *Individualization and Involvement of Consciousness* — At this stage the subtle fabric of nature appears: creative force, particles, space, and time. The intelligence permeating the creative force directs the creative process. This field of con-

sciousness manifesting is termed "the darkness," or that which gives rise to the sense of illusion for the soul overly involved with it. Souls involved at this level feel a sense of being separate from the source, God.

5. *Cosmic Mind* —An omnipresent creative field. This is the One Mind, the Mind of God. It is this Mind with which we work when we pray, when we exercise creative imagination, and when we desire the fulfillment of worthy hopes and dreams.

6—15. *Ten Principles Connecting Mind with the Manifest World* —These provide the basis for the five senses of perception and the five organs of action. Senses include hearing, feeling (touch), sight, smell and taste. Organs of action include speech, motion, excretion, generation, and manual dexterity. Note that these are the subtle counterparts to the physical organs of sense and faculties of the body.

16—20. *The Essences of the Objects of Perception.* —These subtle essences make possible the later unfoldment of the five elements which make up the material world. The essence of sound expresses itself in space; the essence of touch expresses itself in air; the essence of touch expresses itself in air; the essence of sight expresses itself in fire; the essence of taste expresses itself in water; the essence of smell expresses itself in earth.

21—25. *The Five Elements Making Up Material Creation* —These are earth, water, fire, air (gaseous substance) and ether (fine matter).

The masters of enlightenment traditions understand that the world is but an outer expression of inner subtle causes. To comprehend this totality is what it means to be truly enlightened and to be a free soul, even while functioning in the relative spheres.

Center for Spiritual Awareness is a New Era enlightenment ministry with world headquarters in the low mountains of northeast Georgia. Here, on a ten-acre site, can be found the general offices, the guest houses, library, meditation temple, meeting hall and dining room, the children's schoolhouse and a printing plant.

Seminars and retreats are offered throughout the year, and hundreds of truth seekers attend from all parts of the world. CSA honors all enlightenment traditions and contributes its efforts in cooperation with many similar groups in the U.S. and abroad. Books and other publications are distributed in large quantities, and monthly lessons are sent to the supporting membership.

For free information contact: *Center for Spiritual Awareness, Lake Rabun Road, P.O. Box 7, Lakemont, Georgia 30552.* Our telephone number is (404) 782-4723.